

Palestinians snub Norway for U.N. vote

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat ordered one of his ministers to call off a trip to Norway to protest Oslo's abstention in a United Nations vote condemning Israel, the minister said Tuesday. "I was due to go to Norway but President Arafat ordered me not to go as a protest to Norway's position in the General Assembly," International Cooperation Minister Nabil Shaath told journalists. Norway was one of 11 members who abstained last Friday when 134 nations approved the harshest in a string of resolutions condemning Israel's construction of a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem. The United States, Israel and Micronesia voted against the resolution.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Seven Algerians found dead in 'terror zone'

PARIS (R) — The bodies of seven Algerians have been found in an area "known as being a zone targeted by terrorists," the Algerian newspaper Al Watan said on Tuesday. Their bodies were taken late on Monday to the hospital morgue in Saida, about 350 kilometres southwest of Algiers, the newspaper added. Al Watan, normally well-informed on security matters, said most of the seven were young shepherds. They were killed near Moulay Al Arbi, a community bordering Saida and Sidi Bel Abbas provinces. Last week about 160 people died in four days of bloodshed blamed on Islamist militants.

Volume 22 Number 6516

AMMAN WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 1997. DUH'L HIJJA 23, 1417

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

Israeli police shoot PNA policeman

HOD HASHARON (AP) — Israeli police shot and wounded a Palestinian policeman who broke through a checkpoint into Israel in a stolen car on Tuesday, a police spokeswoman said. Linda Menuhin, spokeswoman for Israel's police ministry, said police chased the car after it failed to stop at the Kessem junction, about 15 kilometres northeast of Tel Aviv. The driver of the car ignored orders to stop, and tried to run the Israeli officers down. Ms. Menuhin said. The Israeli police fired at the car tyres and struck the driver of the car in the shoulder, she said. The driver, who was not identified, was arrested, and two passengers who fled from the scene were arrested nearby, she said. Ms. Menuhin said the two passengers were Palestinian prisoners in his custody. It was not immediately clear why the three men were entering Israel. Ms. Menuhin said. Palestinian Security Chief Jibril Rajoub said he did not know anything about the incident.

Egypt wants to fight terrorism on the Internet

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt is training experts to combat the growing potential of crime on the Internet. Interior Minister General Hassan Al Alfi said Tuesday. "We are living in a time when crimes are committed from a distance, when criminal organisations use the Internet and mobile phones to carry out their plans," Gen. Alfi said. "We are engaged in a race against time. If we do not succeed in mastering these technologies and get ahead of the game, we will not be able to fight against this new crime." He said officials at the interior ministry were being taught to fight against these new high-tech crimes and to use the latest technology.

Egyptian Pope says Hamas is 'doing its duty'

CAIRO (R) — The Pope of the Egyptian Coptic Church said Hamas was "doing its duty". Pope Shenouda was speaking to party leaders who came to greet him on Coptic Easter last Saturday and was quoted in the opposition newspaper Al Shaab on Tuesday. His office confirmed he made the remarks. "But he did not call for war," a spokesman added. The Pope said: "The Jews will not leave Jerusalem through negotiations. They will leave it only through blood because of its great importance to them... What is needed is a serious stand by Arab governments to support the struggle of the Palestinians inside," he said. The Pope said that peace with the Israelis would be possible "after they give up the land," but they would not do this easily. He reaffirmed his decree that Egyptian Copts must not visit Israel, even on pilgrimage, and said his ban had an economic and political effect on Israel.

Companies Law awaits enabling Securities Law

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Cabinet on Tuesday said that the Companies Law, approved by Parliament last month, cannot be implemented until the Securities Law draft is passed. The Cabinet explained that the Companies Law includes many articles which refer to the Securities Law and as a result it cannot be practically implemented until the latter, which should have been passed in Parliament during its last session, is passed by the next parliament or issued as a temporary law. The Companies Law was not published in the official papers and as such could be legally postponed. The Cabinet was briefed on Tuesday by Deputy Prime Minister for Development Jawad Anani and Deputy Prime Minister for Services Abdullah Ensour on their consultations with Parliament regarding the draft of the Securities Law and the possibility of enabling it as a temporary law until it is taken to Parliament for approval. Dr. Anani told the Cabinet that the finance committees in the Lower and Upper Houses supported the enactment by the Cabinet

of a temporary securities law in order to encourage foreign investments in the country.

The director of the Amman Financial Market (AFM), Wahib Shaer explained that "the two laws are parallel to each other," whereas "the Companies Law does not include articles that provide for the subscription of company shares. All shares-related articles were included in the proposed temporary securities law," Dr. Shaer said in a telephone interview with the Jordan Times.

He added the proposed 80-article law would include four to five components dealing with AFM market censorship, administration, reconciliation, storage and the creation of a central computer to supply all dealers with necessary information.

Dr. Shaer, who replaced Umayyah Touqan at the AFM, said that the law also calls for establishing an institute to train brokers on how to run the market, conduct examinations and grant licences.

Dr. Shaer said the law will also safeguard the interests of small dealers and make market information available to all without exception.

He added that different parties took part in composing the proposed law including AFM administrators, dealers, the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) and stock market experts.

"This law will have a very positive impact on foreign investments in Jordan as well as it will offer Jordanian firms shares in world markets, therefore it should be approved," Dr. Shaer said.

Member of the Upper House Financial Committee, Kamal Shaer, also reiterated the Cabinet's words stating that the Securities Law should be enacted simultaneously with the Companies Law because both are interlocked.

He said the AFM temporary law and Companies Law are part of the restructuring programme the government signed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to enhance the Kingdom's economy.

The lawmaker added the Parliament did not discuss the draft AFM law because the law was not ready during the last Parliament session.

These laws are an integral part of the economic restructuring programme and the comprehensive measures needed to develop the Kingdom, he said.

Ruling Yemeni party coasts to victory amid fraud claims

SANAA (AFP) — The party of President Ali Abdullah Saleh looked to be coasting to a comfortable victory Tuesday in Yemen's parliamentary elections as its Islamist rivals accused it of widespread fraud.

Of the 167 seats decided so far, the General People's Congress (GPC) won 115 seats, its coalition partner the Islamist Islah Party (IIP) 24, independents 24 and smaller parties four, the official election committee announced.

A total of 301 parliamentary seats were up for grabs in Sunday's elections, the first since Yemen's civil war in 1994.

Said Al Hakimi of the election committee said the GPC had won 13 seats in the capital Sanaa and three of those declared in the main southern city of Aden, where two of its women candidates were elected.

The main opposition Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) in the south boycotted the polls complaining of a lack of national reconciliation.

It was the first official announcement of even partial results, and the IIP accused the president's party of interfering in vote counting.

"Each time one of IIP main candidates seemed to be winning in a constituency, the GPC pressured election committees to stop the count, or the agents for candidates were chased out," the party said in a statement.

"In some cases troops surrounded the polling stations and agents for IIP were arrested," it added.

The independent election-monitoring committee could not confirm the accusations though it said counting had been held up in some places because of tension between the two erstwhile coalition partners.

Mr. Hakimi said he did not know when the final results would be announced but said he hoped it would be within the 72 hours of polling required by law.

IIP leader Sheikh Abdullah Al Ahmar earlier accused the GPC of underhand tactics to ensure a comprehensive victory in the elections.

He said the GPC had "turned to every means possible to win the election, including the use of public funds, power and the armed forces."

International observers judged the elections to be generally fair despite the IIP claims and violence on polling day in which police said 16 people died.

"I am very positively impressed, it is very well organised," said U.S. observer Robert Burrows, one of 116 international monitors.

While a victory for Mr. Saleh's party was not in doubt, the number of seats it wins will determine the make-up of the next government.

After winning less than half the seats



A Yemeni tribesman tests a Russian made Kalashnikov machine-gun before buying it from an arms shop in the Jihana arms market 40 Kilometres south of the Yemeni capital Sanaa. Yemeni tribes consider owning arms an honour. According to statistics some 16 million Yemeni citizens own up to 50 million pieces of weaponry varying from a simple machine-gun to a rocket (AFP photo)

In the last elections in 1993, the GPC formed a coalition with IIP and the YSP. The YSP was kicked out after it declared a breakaway republic in the south sparking the 1994 civil war.

"If the GPC wins a majority in parliament, which we expect, it will no longer need a second party to form a government," Sheikh Ahmar said.

However, the GPC sounded a conciliatory note by suggesting IIP would still be part of a future government.

"The GPC will not lead the next government alone... Yemeni society needs unity," said Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Iriani, the GPC's secretary general.

IIP warned it would only join a new government if the GPC made certain commitments, particularly concerning the fight against corruption and the pursuit of economic reforms.

Since 1995 Yemen has been implementing a series of painful economic reforms deemed vital for kick-starting the meagre economy of a country that ranks among the poorest in the world.

Some 2.44 million people cast their ballots in the elections, or 53.5 per cent of Yemenis at voting age, according to the election monitoring committee.

Yemen is the only country on the Arab peninsula to have a parliament elected by universal suffrage.

The worst violence on polling day came in Abyan province of south Yemen, where a soldier sprayed a polling station with gunfire, killing six other soldiers and two party officials.

Five people were killed north of Sanaa in fights between GPC and IIP supporters, while two civilians died in an ambush by tribal rivals in Dammam, south of the capital.

Closure of West Bank to be eased —Mordechai

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai announced Tuesday a "substantial" easing of restrictions which have barred most Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip from entering Israel for more than a month.

"Tomorrow there will be a substantial easing of the closure," Mr. Mordechai told reporters on a visit to northern Israel. "We are going to arrive at a situation where there will practically be no closure," he said. Nearly 50,000 Palestinians have been prevented from reaching jobs inside Israel by successive closures imposed after anti-Israeli attacks a year ago. Earlier Tuesday the army announced that it was allowing 5,000 Palestinians into Israel, notably employees of the PNA, doctors, teachers, religious leaders and tourism workers.

The land for the Efrat expansion is part of some 400 hectares confiscated by Israel in the late 1980s and early 1990s from the nearby villages of Al Khadr and Irtas, said a lawyer representing Palestinians claiming ownership of the property.

The owners have the right to appeal against construction on the land, but such protests rarely meet with success.

Meanwhile, some 200 Palestinians gathered in the Gaza Strip to protest Israeli construction work at a 1.5 acre site claimed by the Palestinians near Jewish settlements along the Mediterranean coast.

International Cooperation Minister Nabil Shaath said in a speech to demonstrators that Israel "is forbidden by the (Oslo) accord to build a single tent on the site. This is unacceptable."

Arafat woos opponents of peace deal with Israel

NABLUS (R) — President Yasser Arafat held talks with Palestinian opponents of his deadlocked peace accord with Israel into the early hours on Tuesday in a bid to find "common ground," Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials said.

But members of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), boycotted the national unity talks in Nablus, saying Mr. Arafat had yet to free some of the movement's activist held by his authorities.

Hamas, opposed to the Palestinian-Israeli peace deals, has claimed responsibility for suicide bombings in Israel that have killed scores of people and wounded dozens since the 1993 accord.

"President Arafat told the meeting that he regrets that Hamas did not attend," said Tayeb Abdul Rahim, general secretary of the presidency. He said efforts would be made in coming days to bring Hamas back to the "dialogue table."

"The president briefed the Palestinian factions on the difficult political situation resulting from Israel's refusal to implement peace deals and its settlement expansion policy," Mr. Abdul Rahim said. He said the meeting lasted over three hours.

Mr. Arafat faced sharp criticism over his Palestinian National Authority (PNA) security links with Israel in light of the construction of Jewish settlement in the West Bank, which has ignited street unrest and led to a halt in peace talks.

"Arafat said the current political situation

requires that all Palestinians have confidence in the authority and back its policies in order to create common ground," Mr. Abdul Rahim said. The Palestinian leader said on Sunday Israeli and PNA security officials had met to discuss the stabbing deaths of two Israeli women whose bodies were found on Friday in a West Bank nature reserve.

"Arafat clarified during the meeting that the authority doesn't have security cooperation with Israel but that there are contact through the American," Mr. Abdul Rahim said.

Seven Palestinian have been killed in clashes with Israeli troops since Israel broke ground on March 18 for a new Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem.

"After four years we have reached the conclusion that the PLO-Israeli peace deal are a failure, so we believe the dialogue should be aimed at finding other alternative," said Abdul Rahim Mallouh, member of the politburo of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), before the meeting.

Hamas participated in the first national unity talks on Feb. 27, hoping to improve its relations with the PNA. The Islamic Jihad movement has stayed away from both meetings.

"Hamas has decided to boycott this meeting because it has not been properly prepared for and the authority has not made goodwill gestures by releasing jailed members of the movement," said Hamas official Jamal Mansour.

Truce committee meets over Lebanese, Israeli complaints

NAQOURA (AFP) — The international panel monitoring a ceasefire accord in South Lebanon met Tuesday to examine Lebanese and Israeli complaints of violations, a source close to the Lebanese delegation said.

The committee — comprising representatives from France, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and the United States — opened the session at the U.N. peacekeeping forces' headquarters in the border town of Naqoura.

The committee was to hear an Israeli complaint

about an attack by Iranian-backed Hezbollah guerrillas on an army base on the Lebanese-Israeli border on Friday that injured two soldiers.

Israel said rockets landed on northern Israel, while Lebanon said the attack hit Israeli forces inside the Jewish state's self-declared "security zone" in southern Lebanon.

The panel will also discuss a complaint lodged by Lebanon after a school bus packed with children was hit by Israeli fire on Sunday.

The bus was hit by six

12.7-mm bullets fired from a position manned by Israeli troops and allied militiamen on the Kawka-ba hilltop in the occupied border zone, security sources said.

Nobody was harmed but the machine-gun fire caused trauma among the children, aged between four and 12, who were on their way to a school run by Hezbollah.

A Lebanese government official charged that the attack on the bus was a "scandalous violation of the April 26 ceasefire agreement because Israeli

fire targeted civilians."

But a military spokesman in Tel Aviv on Monday denied that Israeli soldiers fired at the bus.

Under the truce accord which ended Israel's "Grapes of Wrath" offensive in Lebanon last year, Israel and Lebanon-based guerrillas are barred from targeting civilians or launching attacks from civilian areas.

Hezbollah spearheads attacks on Israeli forces in South Lebanon in an attempt to force the Jewish state's withdrawal.



SPRING IN BEIRUT: Children on Tuesday gather spring flowers close to an ancient Ottoman mosque in Beirut's war shattered city centre near the Martyrs' Square. Spring which starts on March 21 arrived late this year in Lebanon where rain was still heavy in the last two weeks (Reuters photo)

Israel warns Syria over chemical weapon

KIRYAT SHEMONA (AFP) — Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai accused Syria on Tuesday of producing a potent new type of missile-delivered chemical weapon and warned Damascus not to try to use the weapon against Israel.

Reacting to an Israeli newspaper report that Syria has developed a poison gas called VX to arm its missiles, Mr. Mordechai said: "We knew about this six months ago and have discussed it with different international figures."

"We are following what is developing in Syria and we want to return to peace negotiations," he said, warning the leadership in Damascus "not to mess with us."

"I recommend that every-

one on the other side of the border should find solutions, not threats," he told

reporters during a visit to this northern Israeli town.

Foreign Minister David Levy also warned Syria about using the VX weapon against Israel.

"We are following this development," Mr. Levy told Israel Radio. "We have the capabilities above and beyond the capabilities of our enemies, but we want to advance the peace."

"Anyone who develops this kind of weapon takes on a very, very heavy responsibility," Mr. Levy added.

In its report, the Haaretz newspaper Tuesday said Russian experts had helped Syria develop VX gas and that Damascus was in the early stages of placing the weapons in warheads for its surface-to-surface missiles.

"For a long time the Syrians have had chemical

weapons and gases but this is the first time they have developed VX," the author of the report, Haaretz military expert Zeev Schiff, said on Israel radio.

"This gas is unusual because it affects breathing... and, like a powder, affects the skin as well," he said, adding that gas masks currently distributed to the Israeli public would not protect from the effects of the new weapon.

Due to its heavy consistency, VX dissipates less quickly with winds than other gases Syria possesses, he said.

Syria has not signed the International Treaty Against the Production and Storage of Chemical Weapons, which was to take effect Tuesday.

The Russian government last year opened an investigation against chemical and biological weapons

expert Anatoli Konzevich for allegedly selling Syria several kilograms of raw materials needed to produce the VX gas. But Mr. Konzevich denied the suspicions and was released.

Arab intelligence agencies report that Syria has developed VX and begun installing it on its surface-to-surface missiles, Haaretz reported.

Peace talks between Israel and Syria were suspended a year ago and tensions between the two countries have risen since the election in May 1996 of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing government.

Mr. Netanyahu has categorically rejected Syrian demands for a return of the occupied Golan Heights as a condition for resuming the peace talks.

Yemeni women make big strides through vote

SANAA (AP) — At a boisterous rally under a tent, men wearing traditional daggers sat in front cheering their candidate for parliament, while quiet, veiled women stood in back.

But at this campaign meeting, the speaker inciting the crowd was a woman, as was the candidate they were supporting.

In a region where some women are without the right to drive, much less to vote, Yemeni women are taking a fledgling democracy into their own hands. And in the generation since Yemen emerged from medieval rule, women have made strides — on their own terms — unimaginable in other countries of the Arabian peninsula.

"We can work, we can talk, we can give political speeches in the street, we talk politics, we are candidates and we can be in parliament," said Raufa Hassan, who was the speaker at the rally last week for a female candidate of an Arab nationalist party.

"No women other than us in the whole peninsula and most of the Arab World have this," she said in an interview.

Challenges, of course, remain. Some leaders in the country's second-biggest party grumble about women serving in parliament.

In South Yemen, which merged with the North in 1990, women have lost some rights they enjoyed under the socialist government. Women were appointed as judges and even as leaders of the ruling party. But with the victory of the conservative North in the 1994 civil war, many of those gains disappeared.

Now, women activists see democracy as their arena of struggle. "Yemeni women, by far, the Arabian peninsula's most democratic country, and the only one in which women can vote. The country's elections for parliament Sunday — the first since the civil war — were considered largely free and fair by independent monitors."

An undercurrent of that vote was the role of women.

Efforts by Ms. Hassan's Arab Democratic Institute and others succeeded in more than doubling the number of women registered to vote — from about 600,000 to 1.3 million. In one district, one woman was registered in 1993. Today, there are nearly 3,000.

Women voters even outnumbered men in one district in Sanaa, said election monitors who had observers there.

Fewer women candidates ran for parliament,

but the 19 who did expected to win more seats than the two gained in 1993.

On election day Sunday, women in black veils revealing only their eyes stood in lines that stretched around buildings. Some held their pink voter cards in one hand and cardboard to shield the sun in the other as their children waited nearby.

"When there's support and a good environment, women can emerge generally. No problem," said Ifukar Al Kohlani, a 19-year-old student waiting to vote.

The veil, worn by nearly all women, and Islamic strictures that allow polygamy do not seem to concern women as much as jobs and illiteracy, which at 70 per cent is twice that of men.

Yemen, a country of highlands and deserts, was largely without electricity, cars and the institutions of a modern state when a religious sheik ruled much of the country a generation ago.

The government louts the strides it has made since developing the poor country and gives at least lip service to women's rights. But women in the workplace still unsettle some in a country that remains conservative and fiercely proud of its traditions.

Fatima Al Huraibi, a

television and radio announcer, has worked in broadcast since the civil war — over her family's objections.

"My brothers tried to stop me. I told them I wanted to do it. Why not? Otherwise, 'If you want me to stay at home, just pay me whatever they're paying me a month and I'll stay home,'" she said.

"So they said, 'No, go!'" Amat Alsowda, who as deputy information minister is Yemen's highest-ranking woman official, has drawn the ire of conservative Islamist activists. Their party, known as Islah, has served as the smaller party in the governing coalition.

In a sign of the hurdles women still face, Sheikh Abdul Majid Al Zindani, a hardline Islah leader, criticised her appointment and declared that women should not serve in parliament.

"God made women emotional and did not give them strong character, and emotion does not suit leadership," he said in an interview with Sawt Al Iman, a newspaper in Sanaa.

Ms. Alsowda dismissed the criticism. "This is his personal interpretation," she said. "For me and my colleagues everywhere in the country, we can show through our work that we are equal."

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Turkey gets positive signals from Greece

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey has received "positive signals" from Greece regarding North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)-proposed confidence building measures aimed at defusing tensions between the two archrivals, the Turkish military said Tuesday. "We support the confidence building measures and have received positive signals from Greece," General Cetin Dogan, head of the Operations Department at the Turkish General Staff, told in a briefing for journalists. "But before reaching anything, some time is needed," Gen. Dogan said. He said a recent meeting between Chief of the Turkish General Staff Ismail Karadayi and his Greek counterpart Athanasios Tzoganis at NATO headquarters in Brussels was a positive development on ties between the two countries' militaries.

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14:05 Flintstones
14:30 Cartoon — Adventures of the Rainbow Pond
15:00 French Programmes
16:00 America's Funniest People
16:25 Spell Binder
16:50 Doc — Challenge
17:15 Border Town
18:00 French Programmes
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Grace Under Fire
20:00 Children's Diary
20:30 Challenges
21:10 Drama — Spencer for Hire
22:00 News in English
22:25 Cobra
23:00 Hart to Hart

PRAYER TIMES

04:22 Fajr
05:47 (Sunrise) Duha
12:33 Dhuhur
16:12 Asr
19:19 Maghreb
20:44 Isha

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St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
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WEATHER

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Warm weather conditions will prevail with temperatures rising further and winds southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.
Amman09/23

Aqaba15/30
Deserts08/25
Jordan Valley13/28
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 20, Aqaba 28 Humidity readings: Amman 34 per cent, Aqaba 36 per cent.

Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade617101
Blood Bank775121
Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Department 620321
Hotel Complaints605800
Price Complaints661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls010230
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Radio Jordan774111
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Civil Defence Department 661111
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813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, 644281/6
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Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Munasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/6
Italian, Al-Munhajreen 77101/3
Al-Bashir,775111/26
Army, Marka891611/15
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The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery865199
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07:00 Damascus (RJ)
08:35 Larnaca (RJ)
09:35 Jeddah (RJ)
09:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:55 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
12:00 Jakarta, Abu Dhabi (add) (RJ)
15:40 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:40 Toronto, Montreal (RJ)
18:00 Paris (RJ)
18:40 London, Berlin (RJ)
19:00 Istanbul (RJ)
19:20 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
19:40 Brussels, Vienna (RJ)
19:40 Frankfurt, Paris (RJ)
20:00 Rome (RJ)
00:10 Beirut (RJ)

01:10 Cairo (RJ)
04:55 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
Other Flights
08:15 Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)
10:30 Cairo (MS)
11:00 Sanaa, Hudaiddah (Y)
12:00 Jeddah (SV)
12:55 Bucharest (RO)
13:10 Doha, Abu Dhabi (GF)
14:30 Tunis (TU)
16:20 Algiers (AH)
17:00 Doha (Q7)
19:00 London (GA)
19:30 Istanbul, Damascus (PK)
20:40 London (BA)
21:10 Beirut (ME)
21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)
21:30 Tel Aviv (LY)
23:20 Istanbul (TK)
23:25 Amsterdam (KL)
23:30 Athens (OA)
05:15 Ankara (TK)
DEPARTURES
07:30 Brussels (add) (RJ)
08:30 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
11:45 Berlin, London (RJ)
11:50 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:50 Rome (RJ)
12:55 Casablanca (RJ)
13:45 Istanbul (RJ)
20:35 Beirut (RJ)

21:05 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
21:10 Cairo (RJ)
21:15 New Delhi (RJ)
21:20 Colombo (RJ)
21:30 Bombay (RJ)
21:45 Calcutta, Bangkok (RJ)
22:05 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
01:45 Sanaa (RJ)
03:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
04:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
Other Flights
06:50 Larnaca (CY)
08:45 Beirut (ME)
09:25 London (BA)
10:00 Damascus, Istanbul (PK)
11:20 Cairo (MS)
13:40 Hudaiddah, Sanaa (Y)
13:30 Jeddah (SV)
14:00 Bahrain, Muscat (GF)
15:30 Tunis (TV)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
17:20 Sharjah (AH)
17:50 Doha (Q7)
20:15 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)
21:40 Belaslar (CL)
22:50 Tel Aviv (LY)
23:55 Damascus, Paris (AF)
00:25 Amsterdam (KL)
00:25 Ankara (PK)
04:00 Athens (OA)
06:15 Istanbul (TK)
HUAAZ RAILWAY TRAIN
Dep. Amman8:00 am every Monday
Arr. Damascus5:00 pm every Monday
Dep. Damascus7:30 am every Sunday
Arr. Amman5:00 pm every Sunday

Task force urges action to combat exploitation, abuse of children

By Francesca Ciriaci
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Sensitive issues such as child labour, child abuse and neglect, or, less dramatically, school drop-out rates, are hidden, and the figures related to them are difficult to tally, but society should not be resigned to them as if they were inevitable, the National Task Force for Children (NTFC) urges.

This non-governmental organisation (NGO), established as a coordinating agency for all national efforts for the survival, protection, development and participatory rights of the child, is going to launch a preliminary report on child labour within the next few months, NTFC General Coordinator Hayat Malhas Yaghi announced.

"In industrial areas, petrol stations or garages, children work in environments which are, at times, highly risky for their health," Ms. Yaghi noted.

"We are committed to personally meeting these children, interviewing them and seeing their families," she added.

According to Director of Research and Database Centre at the NTFC Abdelhazef Sbayed, the preliminary reports should be ready "by the end of August."

Dr. Sbayed added that his department is affiliated with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, "which partially supports the NTFC database and research unit and organises fellowships for NTFC staff."

The preliminary report will be prepared with the assistance of international organisations, such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and in cooperation with local institutions, such as the Ministry of Labour

and the Ministry of Social Development.

The results of the preliminary report on child labour will also be the focus of seminars for institutions and NGOs concerned with child protection and development, which will draft the agenda for a broader "national conference" on the issue, Ms. Yaghi told the Jordan Times.

Sbe stressed the need for differentiating between exploitation of children for labour and the cultural traditions of rural areas. "In rural areas and the badia, children are committed to their families and help in grazing the flocks," she explained, also suggesting that "awareness should be raised among parents on the importance of sending their children to school regularly."

By the same token, "in rural areas, time which children spend helping their families should be compensated and recognised by educational institutions in some way," Ms. Yaghi proposed.

Official statistics demonstrate that school enrolment in Jordan is around 92 per cent complete, among the highest in developing countries and competitive with that of industrialised countries.

Official figures regarding school drop-outs are not available, but international organisations estimate it as near three per cent.

In co-partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the NTFC is also working for the advancement of local legislation on children's rights and child protection.

"By the end of 1997, we hope to have finalised a more comprehensive version of Jordan's Rights of the Child Act, to be approved by His Majesty

King Hussein and ratified by the Parliament," Ms. Yaghi said.

According to the NTFC coordinator, "current legislation on children's rights protection covers some areas only and is in need of upgrading."

The Kingdom signed the Arab Charter on the Rights of the Arab Child in 1987 and ratified the International Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991.

The rights of the child, which Jordan has promised to secure and ensure, include: Children's right to survival, meaning right to life, adequate shelter, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene, access to health care; Children's development rights, in the form of the right to education, culture, information, freedom of thought and conscience; Children's protection rights, translating into their right to freedom from physical and emotional abuse, from child labour, drug abuse and sexual exploitation; Children's participation rights, meaning the right of the child to express his/her opinion, to be consulted and heard in matters that concern them, as well as the right to free association and the daily life of their society.

To fulfil its objectives, the NTFC is in constant need of financial contribution.

"Through UNICEF funding and individual donations we have been able to survive so far," said Ms. Yaghi, who is responsible for a staff of nine.

"But due to lack of funding we have not been able to operate our information, education, and communication section," she lamented.

Established by Royal Decree in 1995, the NTFC is chaired by Her Majesty Queen Noor.

Canada, Jordan sign environmental memorandum

AMMAN (J.T.) — A memorandum of understanding for the King Hussein Environmental Training Programme (KHETP) was signed Tuesday by Minister of Planning Dr. Rima Khalaf and Mr. Michael Molloy, the Canadian ambassador to Jordan, according to a Canadian embassy statement.

The C\$2.0 million training programme will be funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). It will be coordinated by the General Corporation for Environmental Protection (GCEP) with the support of the World University Services of Canada (WUSC), the statement said.

The goal of the project is to develop human resources and build the institutional capacity to provide Jordan with environmental management expertise to develop its economy while protecting both its natural and human environment.

This four-year programme takes a comprehensive approach to environmental management training through designing and implementing educational initiatives in areas such as environmental impact assessment, envi-



Minister of Planning Dr. Rima Khalaf and Mr. Michael Molloy, the Canadian ambassador to Jordan, sign memorandum of understanding for the King Hussein Environmental Training Programme (KHETP) (Petra photo)

ronment audits, industrial and hazardous waste management, organising environmental information as a tool for policy formulation and public awareness programmes, the statement said.

This programme will target the private sector, non-governmental organisations

(NGOs) and training institutions which have the mandate and the potential to develop or expand their role in environmental management training. It will support building the capacity of these institutions to deliver their own modules of need assessments, training of trainers, training

delivery and evaluation. The participating training institutions include the Jordan Environment Society (JES), The Jordan Institute for Public Administration (JIPA), The Royal Scientific Society (RSS) and the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST).

Cabinet sanctions execution of two convicted of murder

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Cabinet Tuesday ratified a recent Court of Cassation ruling to execute two Egyptian nationals, found guilty of murdering their colleague in the Jordan Valley in October of 1995.

The two men, Mahmoud Mohammad Aswan, 38, and Kaboud Hamdan Rasslan, 20, were declared guilty by the Criminal Court on Dec. 10, 1996, of killing Jamal Mahmoud Abu Zeinab on a farm in Ghor Safi on Oct. 3 of the previous year.

According to court transcripts, the men had worked together on the same

farm for a period of three months.

"One month prior to the incident, Mr. Aswan and Mr. Rasslan evidenced difficulties with Mr. Abu Zeinab, regarding three dollars and a gas cylinder, and plotted to kill him," court papers said.

On the night of the murder, the court said, the two men, carrying shovels, departed for the house in which the victim was residing and struck him on the head several times until he was dead.

The two then dragged his body to a nearby farm, buried him there, and covered the ground with shrubs.

The Cabinet decision will be transferred to His Majesty King Hussein

for endorsement.

Two men have been executed in Jordan since the beginning of the year. They were convicted of murder and attempted rape by the Criminal Court in separate cases.

Last year, 10 people were put to death for various crimes in the Kingdom.

Also in 1996, the Criminal Court authorised death sentences for 23 people, including five women, two sentenced in absentia.

The three women's sentences were upheld by the Court of Cassation in March of 1997.

Government to consider new water strategy

By Nadia Mukhlis
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government is considering a new water and irrigation strategy plan prepared by Ministry of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin and submitted to the Cabinet for its consideration earlier this week, a report in the local press said.

According to the plan, published in Al Ra'i Arabic daily this week, the new strategy delineates:

- The establishment of a national water and irrigation data bank, in support of a monitoring system programme to gather, update, process and publish information pertaining to water.
- Maximum utilisation of the energy of surface and subterranean water to achieve the greatest economic benefit, maintaining awareness of social and environmental aspects.
- Geological studies conducted on subterranean water levels to support developmental planning.

All studies will be conducted in order to combine benefits from both surface and ground water sources, in accordance with their individual qualities, the report said.

Previously utilised and/or brackish water is to be re-gathered in accordance with standards which allow for its application for agricultural purposes.

Appropriate technologies will be adapted for the processing of used water, while different studies are covering the possibility of mixing it with fresh water for agricultural use, according to the report.

The expansion of the private sector in this field is highly recommended, whether in terms of full privatisation, franchises or any other methods of co-ordination between the private and public sectors, it said.

Financially, the study aims at recovering the costs of facilities and provisions of services.

According to the study, financing will take each individual's portion of water, the cost of living and family consumption into account.

The recovery of capital cost will be cautiously handled, the report said.

Financing of projects will continue to depend on delayed payment loans, pri-

vate sector lending, BOT (Build, Operate, Transfer) and BOO (Build, Own, Operate) arrangements, until all expenses and costs are returned and a national savings level is reached which can finance local development projects.

Pressure from the population and demands for water in Jordan has augmented of late, according to the study. In 1996, an individual's share of renewal water resources averaged 175 square metres, and his/her share of agricultural land was 1,000 square metres (one dunum).

Therefore, the report said, it was not possible to expect balance between foreign trade and food production in the country.

Modest quantities of water were provided for municipal purposes in which an individual's portion averaged 57 square metres or 156 litres per diem.

The deficit in the trade balance, in regards to food, for that year stood at \$95 per capita, according to the report.

This problem surfaced over the past few years, due to different regional problems, resulting in the migration of thousands of people into the country, forming large new population centres far from water resources.

This, in turn, led to an increase in prices and expenses of water supplies and waste water disposal as well as that of annual maintenance and water shortages in the Kingdom.

An individual's share in 1996, from the gross domestic product, was JD 1,050, the same amount as in the year 1981.

Consequently, a high consumption of ground water led to the decrease of spring and well water sources.

Fresh water sources are 20 per cent higher than their normal rate of consumption, and in the year 2005, there will be no known sources to develop, the report stated.

Economic corrections and stringent procedures must be followed and studied to obtain a strategic policy to solve water resource problems in Jordan, it concluded.

BBC Arabic service to expand broadcasts

AMMAN (J.T.) — Listeners of the Arabic service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in Jordan, along with those of four other countries in the region, will benefit from expanded broadcasts beginning in May, according to a BBC statement released Tuesday.

The radio audience in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel and Jordan will receive broadcasts on a 417 medium wave length at a frequency of 720 kilohertz throughout the day beginning at 6:30 a.m., and continuing until midnight.

The broadcasts will include news every hour, two expanded news reports at noon and 2:00 p.m., and an edition of "open programme" at 10:10 a.m., the statement said.

In May, the BBC Arabic service will introduce special educational programmes, programmes for families and broadcasts specifically oriented to a female audience.

In June, these broadcasts will reach Jordan, Egypt, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Israel on the medium wave length of 469 at a frequency of 639 kilohertz.

According to the statement, the programmes' expansion was deemed necessary in accordance to listeners' stated wishes.

A two-month trial period of expanded programmes was implemented last year during Israeli attacks on Lebanon as well as in autumn of last year.

However, due to financial constraints, the expansion of the BBC Arabic service programmes was not possible at that time, the statement said.

University inaugurates seminar on delivery care

AMMAN (Petra) — The University of Jordan Tuesday opened a two-day seminar on emergency delivery care, attended by family doctors and organised by the University of Jordan in conjunction with Brown University in the United States.

The University of Jordan has been cooperating with Brown University and the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST) over the past three years to provide advanced services for Jordanian families, University of Jordan President Fawzi Gbaraibeh asserted at the opening session.

Dean of the University of Jordan's Faculty of Medicine and Director of the University of Jordan Hospital Dr. Mahmoud Abu Khalaf outlined ongoing cooperation between the University of Jordan and Brown University in family medicine.

He called for the establishment of a specialised programme in Jordan for training local medical teams in the field of family medicine.

Dr. Vincent Hunt from Brown University expressed satisfaction with cooperation between the two institutions, while Dr. Mahmoud Amer from the University of Jordan Hospital outlined the seminar's objectives.

The seminar is designed to orient Jordanian doctors as regards to emergency situations in the delivery room and improving care for pregnant women in various communities, according to Dr. Amer.

He described the agenda as including important topics for general practitioners, notably those employed by the University of Jordan and JUST, the Health Ministry, private hospitals and the Royal Medical Services of the Jordan Armed Forces.

Special treatment for Israel's Jordanian illegal workers

AMMAN (J.T.) — Israel is turning a blind eye to thousands of illegal Jordanian workers within its borders, providing a kind of unspoken "benefit of peace," a senior Jordanian source told the Jerusalem Report.

Illegal Jordanian workers in Israel number up to 25,000, according to the Amman official, though other Jordanian sources estimate the figure as closer to 10,000-12,000. Tova Ellinson, spokeswoman for the Israeli Interior Ministry, says it's very hard to give numbers as "they come as tourists and stay."

However, she adds that there are "clearly several thousands."

Most of the Jordanians are in the Galilee, working in construction, services and, often, Israeli Arab-owned factories. Some have relatives here.

"They make quite a lot of money," says Jordanian Ambassador in Tel Aviv Omar Rifai. Unemployment levels are high in Jordan, while an average salary there is under \$200 a month. The \$2,000 per month a Jordanian can earn in Israel is "a significant amount on income" to take back, Mr. Rifai says.

He rejects the notion that there is any "secret agreement." Israel is only now beginning to crack down on the phenomenon of illegal workers in

general, he notes, and it is too early to discern whether Jordanians will be targeted.

Israel is thought to be hosting up to 200,000 illegal workers from around the world. In 1996, 1,975 deportation orders were issued.

But Ms. Ellinson confirms that the Jordanians have hardly been touched. "I don't know why it is. If the Jordanians work quietly, we don't issue deportation orders against them. Whether that's good or bad I don't know, but it's the truth."

Reprinted from the Jerusalem Report

Experts call for greater use of mineral resources

AMMAN (Petra) — Participants in the Second Jordanian Mining Conference Tuesday emphasised utilisation of mineral resources in the Arab World, and called for offering soft loans, in addition to customs and tax incentives, to encourage the private sector to invest in this domain.

During the conclusion of the four-day meetings, they recommended the establishment of specialised regional centres to extract and process mineral ores as well as oil.

Participants also recommended the establishment of two regional centres, one dealing with water studies, and the second on energy research.

The group called on Arab countries to exploit and share common water resources.

It encouraged geological, geophysical and geo-chemical studies previous to implementing mineral industry projects.

Nationally, the group stressed the importance of cooperation between the public and private sectors, and called for increasing allocations for exploration works, including prospecting for new sources of water, energy and minerals while avoiding environmental pollution.

The meeting highlighted the importance of developing a national, comprehensive plan on water usage, in light of integrated studies on water basins.

Participating in the conference were representatives of nine Arab countries, Bulgaria and Russia.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

*"Sooty Start to Read" at the British Council, Jabel Amman at 5:00 p.m.

CONCERTS

*"Abdul Halim Hafez in the voice of Atallah Hundaib" — marking the 20th anniversary of the passing of singer Abdul Halim Hafez at the City Hall, Amman Municipality at 8:00 p.m.

*Piano recital by Swiss Pianist Werner Bartschi at Darat Al Funun, Jabel Weibdeh at 7:00 p.m.

LECTURE

*"Arabs and Information Revolution" by Dr. Abdul Majid Nusseir at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabel Amman at 6:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

*"First Amman International Exhibition of Children's Books" at the International Exhibition Centre, University Road (Tel. 659891/2), until April 30.

WINNERS OF THE TERRY FOX / AL AMAL CENTER RUN

THESE ARE THE NUMBERS FOR THE RAFFLE PRIZES FOR THE TERRY FOX / AL AMAL CENTER RUN, HELD ON FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 1997. PLEASE PICK-UP THESE PRIZES AT THE CANADIAN EMBASSY, SHMEISANI, BY THURSDAY, MAY 8, 1997.

13257 - 19808 - 08053 - 10484 - 00976 - 09968 - 03260 - 11055 - 17717 - 12724 - 28347 - 21876 - 14180 - 23126 - 13813 - 20026 - 02274 - 22549 - 19175 - 31697 - 00026 - 00540 - 01582 - 26148 - 26402 - 18012 - 21053 - 25187 - 12959 - 13370 - 14527 - 20144 - 07223 - 12675 - 10001 - 27457 - 04386 - 04316 - 09943 - 13571 - 01801 - 05899 - 13720 - 08732 - 10267 - 06404 - 19025 - 18938 - 16075 - 15021 - 09364 - 07906 - 16001 - 05535 - 17964 - 08403 - 09076 - 06494 - 04826 - 08153 - 02937 - 17213 - 05935 - 17714 - 14576

Jordan Times
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Russia sends tough message to Chechenya after blast

MOSCOW (R) — Russian Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov sent a tough message to Chechen leaders Tuesday, blaming Chechens for a bomb blast and expressing fears that violence was spinning out of control in the north Caucasus.

Mr. Kulikov, who is also a deputy prime minister, said police had detained two Chechen women fighters suspected of organising the explosion in the spa resort of Pyatigorsk Monday which killed two people and wounded more than 20 at a railway station.

He said the two were part of a Chechen armed group which attacked the Russian town of Budennovsk in 1995 and staged a bloody hostage drama in which more than 100 people were killed.

"These are not rebels. This is not a political struggle, this is banditry," he

said. "We will catch and destroy those criminals."

Mr. Kulikov's remarks sounded similar to those which Moscow officials made late in 1994 on the eve of military intervention in Chechenya, which they called a haven for criminals.

The blast at the railway station in Pyatigorsk, about 130 kilometres northwest of Chechenya, wrecked the station roof, blew out all the windows and caused major damage inside the building.

A spokesman for the Federal Security Service (FSB) in Moscow said a man died instantly when the bomb exploded near the ticket office in the first-floor waiting room. A teenage girl died of her wounds during the night, he added.

Mr. Kulikov said 22 other people were injured, four of them seriously.

Chechen leaders denied any involvement in Mon-

day's blast or in a bomb explosion at Armavir Railway Station in southern Russia last Wednesday which also killed two people.

The separatist leaders, who fought a nearly 21-month conflict with Russian troops that killed tens of thousands before last August's truce, said Russian security forces were to blame. This implied some Russian forces wanted to stir tensions.

"I categorically declare that the Chechen side did not take part in the terrorist acts on Russian territory," Chechen Vice President Vakha Arsanov told Ekho Moskvy radio station.

Mr. Kulikov dismissed Chechen statements as "absurd" and said he feared Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov, elected in January, was losing control.

"It has become evident that there is no unity in the

Chechen leadership and Maskhadov may be unable to control the situation," said Mr. Kulikov, who commanded Russia's forces in Chechenya until July 1995 when he became interior minister.

"If Maskhadov does not get rid of terrorists in his entourage, his regime will become a criminal one," he added.

Mr. Kulikov added that the people of the north Caucasus had demanded that Moscow take harsh measures against Chechen "bandits" and said there was a danger of pogroms of Chechens in Russia after "terrorist acts" by Chechens.

"The situation in the north Caucasus is becoming extremely tense. I am afraid it could become uncontrollable. Chechen pogroms may start," he said.

U.S., China hail ties agree on port calls

WASHINGTON (R) — Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen hailed positive momentum in bilateral ties, but their two-hour meeting produced little immediate achievement beyond an agreement on navy port calls to Hong Kong.

Despite upbeat comments about China's bid to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the much-improved trend in Sino-American relations, Mrs. Albright again pressed Beijing for "concrete and meaningful steps" in major areas of contention where there had been little or no movement, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns told reporters.

These included human rights, arms-related export controls and the importance of preserving autonomy and basic freedoms in Hong Kong when the British colony reverts to China's control on July 1, he said.

Separately, Chinese spokesman Shen Guofang told reporters that despite U.S. suspicions raised by Mrs. Albright, China "has no nuclear cooperation with Iran whatsoever" and "has never been engaged in any activities like political donations" to U.S. election campaigns, as recent media reports have alleged.

On human rights, Mr. Shen said "the U.S. side (told Qian) it would not seek confrontation (while) the Chinese side said it would discuss human rights issues on the basis of equality."

The two ministers, who last met in February in Beijing, held a working dinner after their meeting. They are preparing the way for a full summit in Washington between President Bill Clinton and Chinese President Jiang Zemin.

Although Mrs. Albright and Mr. Burns insisted the summit was on target for the fall, no specific date has been announced, raising suspicions the U.S. side is waiting to see what happens when Hong Kong changes hands.

Mr. Burns said during their "good and constructive meeting" the two ministers gave final approval to an agreement setting terms for U.S. Navy port calls in Hong Kong after July 1.

In December, U.S. and Chinese defence ministers agreed in principle that port calls would continue, but now there is a specific understanding on procedures for those visits, Mr. Burns said.

Monday's meeting began on a positive note, with Mrs. Albright saying: "For both America and China, the benefits of our dialogue are tangible and growing. We're not yet where we want to be but the direction in which we must go is clear."



Famous Taiwanese actress and talk show hostess Pai Ping-Ping (left) and her only daughter Pai Hsiao-Yen attended a charity event in Taipei. The 17-year-old Pai Hsiao-Yen was kidnapped on April 14 and found dead on April 28 (Reuters photo)

Taiwan grief-stricken, outraged at Kidnapped girl's murder

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan Tuesday was grief-stricken and outraged at the murder of an actress's teenage daughter as police stepped up the search for her kidnappers and killers.

The strangled body of Pai Hsiao-Yen, daughter of actress Pai Ping-Ping, was found floating in a river in Taipei county late Monday. She was naked, her hands and legs bound by rope.

She had been weighed down with iron bammers, police said.

Seventeen-year-old Pai Hsiao-Yen, the only child of the actress and talk show hostess, was kidnapped on her way to school on April 14 and had been dead for at least eight days, Coroner Yang Jih-Sung said.

Police originally gave her age as 16.

Her captors had demanded a \$5 million ransom. Her mother had wanted to pay the ransom, but the kidnappers aborted a planned meeting.

Police arrested four suspects Friday night, but three others remained at large.

Police and military agencies Tuesday intensified their island-wide search for the suspects, with stringent checks at ports and airports.

Senior officials said they were saddened and angered by the killing.

"President Lee Teng-Hui is extremely saddened. He is especially outraged by the criminals' inhuman method," the presidential office said in a statement.

"As the head of the state, the president... shares the anger and bitterness with his countrymen."

Lawmakers from the opposition New Party asked Mr. Lee to apologise to the public for Taiwan's deteriorating law and order.

The main opposition Democratic Progressive Party demanded the resignations of Premier Lien Chan, Interior Minister Lin Feng-Cheng and National Police Administration Chief Yao Kao-Chiao.

Classmates of Pai Hsiao-Yen said the government should focus on law and order rather than trying to boost the island's image

abroad.

"I hope those politicians can devote more time to improve social order instead of spending that much time on defence and foreign affairs," said one weeping.

"I hope Pai Hsiao-Yen is the last victim in this society," another said.

"A life has vanished... what's the good even if we have the world?" a Nationalist lawmaker Chu Feng-Chih said in parliament.

Police said the kidnappers strangled Pai Hsiao-Yen and submerged her body in the river with the help of six large iron bammers.

The kidnappers had chopped off half of the victim's left little finger, sent it to her mother and demanded a \$5 million ransom, one of the highest ever on the island.

Taiwan reported 156 kidnapping cases in 1996, the highest number since 1990, the state-run Central News Agency said.

In January and February this year, 34 kidnapping cases were reported, all of which had been solved, it said.

Chinese forces shoot dead two protestors, injures five in Xinjiang

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese security forces shot dead two people and wounded five others when they opened fire on a mob trying to free prisoners in the troubled Xinjiang region, a top Chinese official confirmed Tuesday.

"The police first fired in the air but then they were forced to open fire on the troublemakers when two security cordons around a truck transporting the prisoners were broken through," said Zhang Yuliang, head of the Xinjiang Propaganda Department.

"Seven people were wounded, of whom two died later. Both were Uighur. Then everything returned to normal."

Casualty figures from Thursday's incident, in the Uighur town of Yining, were expected to rise, said residents, who estimated several hundred people were in the crowd which dispersed rapidly after the shooting.

"At least two more people died in hospital," one resident said without giving further details.

The incident followed a public trial, after which at least three separatists were executed for stirring unrest in the mainly Muslim northwestern region.

A total of 27 others were sentenced to heavy jail terms for their part in early February riots.

China has confirmed three executions, but Uighur separatists based in neighbouring Kazakhstan put the number of those executed at seven.

Yining was still on a high state of alert Tuesday, local sources said.

"Police have stepped up their presence in the streets and even more so in the surrounding countryside," one source said on condition of anonymity.

"It is impossible to leave the area without having to submit to identity checks." The executed youths had been judged to have "actively participated" in February clashes between Han Chinese settlers and protestors, which officially killed 10 people. Unofficial estimates put the toll at around 100.

Around 93 per cent of China's 1.22 billion population is Han Chinese, with the remainder made up of 55 officially recognised minorities, largely dispersed in vast border regions including Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia.

Ethnic clashes between the Uighurs and the Han in Xinjiang are frequent occurrences in the vast semi-desert region, which is home to 16 million people.

Wang Lequan, the secretary general of the Communist Party in Xinjiang, said recently the battle against separatism would be "long and intense."

The Uighur separatists in Xinjiang have been encouraged by the independence of the Central Asian states across the border after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Some 50 people were arrested in Yining, the capital of Kazakhstan, during a demonstration against the executions in Yining.

Some 350,000 Uighur live in exile in Central Asia, with 200,000 of them in Kazakhstan.

'China boosts forces around Spratly reef'

PUERTO PRINCESA, Philippines (AFP) — The Chinese military has deployed three frigates around a reef in the disputed Spratly Islands off this southwestern Philippine city, Philippine military sources said here Tuesday.

The frigates, spotted last week on Mischief Reef, prompted the deployment Monday of an additional company of Marines to the Philippine military garrison on Pag-Asa Island, the sources added.

A Chinese aircraft was also spotted flying over Mischief Reef, which is claimed by Manila and is the location of four permanent structures built by the Chinese. Beijing claims these

are fishermen's shelters.

The arrival of the frigates was noted a few days after the visit here of Defence Secretary Renato De Villa, the sources added.

The Chinese embassy in Manila, however, denied knowledge of the frigates' presence.

"I don't know anything about navy frigates (there). What I do know is that Mischief Reef is just a fishery shelter," Hao Yinbiao, Chinese embassy spokesman told AFP.

The presence of the Chinese on Mischief Reef has been a source of tension in diplomatic relations between Manila and Beijing since 1995, when the structures were first discovered

by the Philippines.

Two months ago, Mr. De Villa and his counterpart, Chinese Defence Minister Chi Haotian, agreed in Manila to improve measures to address the two countries' dispute over the spratlys.

Embassy spokesman Hao said Tuesday that "Mechanisms for bilateral talks" to improve cooperation over the Spratlys "have been yielding positive results."

Experts from both the Philippines and China have been meeting "over the past couple of years" to discuss cooperation in fisheries, marine environmental protection as well as confidence building measures in the Spratlys, Mr. Hao told AFP.



Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev (left) and Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan (right) stretch for a hand-shake while Turkish President Suleyman Demirel (centre) looks on at a Black Sea conference in Istanbul. The Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan held a meeting at a conference of Black Sea countries following some of worst fighting between the Caucasus neighbours in nearly three years (Reuters photo)

Armenian and Azeri presidents fail to make progress toward settling dispute

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders who have met here failed to make progress towards settling a bloody territorial dispute between the two former Soviet republics, both sides said.

"It was not much more than a cordial meeting," Armenian sources close to President Levon Ter-Petrosyan told AFP after he met Azerbaijani President Geidar Aliyev.

"There are no changes in our views," Abbas Hachalolu, Azerbaijan's consul-general in Istanbul, told reporters.

Mr. Ter-Petrosyan made no public remarks after 40 minutes of talks while Mr. Aliyev told reporters: "It was a normal meeting."

But the Armenian sources said: "Still a meeting is better than no meeting and such talks might lead to a rapprochement in the future."

The two leaders' meeting, the first of its kind since border clashes caused casualties earlier this month, took place on the sidelines

of a Black Sea business conference and under the auspices of Turkish President Suleyman Demirel.

Nearly 20,000 people had been killed in a war between Armenians and Azeris over the sovereignty of Nagorno-Karabakh, a disputed enclave inside Azerbaijan but mainly populated by ethnic Armenians, between 1988 and 1994.

Despite a volatile truce since May 1994, dozens of people have been killed from the two sides in border clashes in the last few weeks.

"We are trying to achieve peace in the Caucasus," Mr. Demirel told reporters minutes before the Azeri-Armenian talks. "If there is peace in the Caucasus, this will boost cooperation in the Black Sea region," he said.

In the six-year bitter war, local Armenians supported by Yerevan had taken control of the whole of Karabakh.

The Azeris complain that a 20 per cent of Azerbaijan proper has also been cap-

tured by the Armenians, causing nearly one million people to flee their homes.

Azerbaijan calls for the preservation of its territorial integrity while the local Armenians of Karabakh have been consolidating their grip on the enclave.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has failed in its efforts to broker a peaceful settlement for the Karabakh conflict.

Turkey, which has close ethnic, linguistic and religious ties with Azerbaijan, gave diplomatic support to Baku throughout the dispute. It is still keeping its border with Armenia closed, rejecting Armenian requests to resume trade.

Mr. Aliyev, Mr. Demirel and Mr. Ter-Petrosyan as well as the presidents of Georgia, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine are also attending the Black Sea business conference which opened Monday.

The conference aims at boosting international investment in the Black Sea region.

Megawati supporters disrupt Indonesian opposition rally

JAKARTA (AFP) — Supporters of Indonesia's popular ousted politician Megawati Sukarnoputri disrupted a rally held by a rival faction of her opposition party, reports said Tuesday.

Thousands of Megawati supporters joined the 4,000-strong crowd at the Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI) rally, which was organised by a faction loyal to her rival Suryadi.

Several of her supporters took over the stage at the rally in Surabaya, East Java, Monday and began chanting pro-Megawati slogans, the Kompas daily said.

The two factions hurled stones and boules at each other before the meeting was cancelled.

With government backing Mr. Suryadi ousted Mrs. Megawati, daughter of modern Indonesia's founding father, former President Sukarno, in mid-term last June as leader of the party.

The Indonesian government has rejected her list of parliamentary candidates for the coming elections, including Mrs. Megawati's own name.

Local pro-Suryadi official, Sabrot Dodong Malioboro, who ended the rally, also said his party would refrain from further campaign activities in East Java "to prevent further negative impacts."

"PDI needs security guarantees," Mr. Malioboro said, adding "the recurrence

of such incidents may psychologically affect and disadvantage PDI members."

Mrs. Megawati herself told her faction Sunday to boycott the month-long campaign, although her officials said later she would participate in the election, due on May 29.

Mr. Suryadi remains unpopular among the party faithful and on Monday was faced with further disruption by Mrs. Megawati's supporters, particularly in Java.

In Jakarta Suryadi complained to the National Election Supervision Committee many of the PDI flags and banners installed by his supporters around the city disappeared after a few hours.

Bombing trial hears passage said to inspire McVeigh

DENVER (R) — An FBI agent who searched Oklahoma city bombing defendant Timothy McVeigh's car after McVeigh's arrest testified Monday that he found passages from a right-wing novel alleged to be a blueprint for the attack.

FBI special agent William Eppright said he found sheets of paper containing short passages from the *The Turner Diaries* inside a sealed envelope in Mr. McVeigh's car.

Government prosecutors say the tale of an attack on FBI headquarters was Mr. McVeigh's inspiration for the April 19, 1995, bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building that killed 168 people.

"The real value of our attacks today lies in the psychological impact, not in the immediate casualties," Mr. Eppright read from the sheets in the courtroom.

"More important, though, is what we taught the politicians and bureaucrats today. They learned this afternoon not one of them is beyond our reach. They can huddle behind barbed wire and tanks in the city, or they can hide behind the concrete walls and alarm systems of their country estates. But we can still find them and kill them," Mr. Eppright read.

Earlier, the state trooper who arrested Mr. McVeigh said he found a handwritten note about the need to buy more explosives in a patrol car where Mr. McVeigh had sat.

"TNT, \$5 a stick. Need more. Call after 1 May, see if I can get some more," read the notation on the back of a business card, Oklahoma state trooper Charles Hanger testified.

Mr. Hanger arrested Mr. McVeigh north of Oklahoma City hours after the bombing when he noticed his yellow 1977 Mercury Marquis had no license plate.

Mr. Eppright said that when he searched Mr. McVeigh's car he also found sheets containing quotations from Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams and philosopher John Locke. "When the government fears the people, there is liberty. When the people fear government, there is tyranny," a quote from Samuel Adams said.

Mr. McVeigh, who has pleaded not guilty to the bombing and faces the death penalty if convicted, watched the proceedings intently but showed no emotion.

Mr. Hanger testified that when he arrested Mr. McVeigh the Gulf War veteran was armed with a semi-automatic pistol. "I noticed he had a bulge under his left arm," he said. He asked Mr. McVeigh to open his jacket slowly and Mr. McVeigh told him: "I have a weapon."

Mr. Hanger, who testified he had no idea that Mr. McVeigh might be linked to the bombing when he arrested him, asked Mr. McVeigh why he carried the pistol. "He felt he had the right to carry it for his protection," he said Mr. McVeigh told him.

Under cross-examination by defence counsel, Mr. Hanger said Mr. McVeigh was cooperative during the arrest.

The prosecution also tried to establish the integrity of the evidence collected from Mr. McVeigh by showing it was not contaminated. Mr. Hanger testified that his patrol car was new when he received it and that it had not been used to transport explosives or transport individuals who had been charged with possession of explosives.



The U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson (left) delivers a statement upon his arrival at his hotel in Kinshasa. Mr. Richardson met Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko and was expected to meet rebel leader Laurent-Désiré Kabila to get peace negotiations started (Reuters photo).

Rebels confirm Kabila-Mobutu meeting

LUBUMBASHI, Zaire (AFP) — Zairean rebel leader Laurent Kabila and President Mobutu Sese Seko will meet in the coming days "somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean," the "foreign minister" of the rebel alliance Bizima Kahara said Tuesday.

"I would like to specify that we are going to discuss the means of Mobutu's departure from office and not a ceasefire or the end of the war," Mr. Kahara, who is also negotiator for the alliance, told a press conference here.

"The war will only end when the person who began it is no longer there," he continued, adding that the meeting would only take "a few hours."

According to Mr. Kahara, Mr. Mobutu has accepted the principle that he will have to step down "otherwise he would not be coming to the talks."

Earlier U.S. envoy Bill Richardson said Mr. Mobutu was willing to meet Mr. Kabila immediately after meeting the head of state as part of a diplomatic shuttle mission.

He held out the hope of talks by the weekend — "the sooner the better" — but said no date or location had been fixed yet.

South Africa, which has been involved in negotiations on the Zairean civil war, has said a South African naval vessel would be the venue for such talks.

Mr. Kabila's rebels have captured more than half of the vast country and taken control of most of its mineral wealth since they began their offensive in mid-October to topple Mr. Mobutu's regime.

One of the major stumbling blocks on getting the two leaders to meet so far has been Mr. Kabila's insistence that Mr. Mobutu must resign after more than three decades in office.

Mr. Richardson arrived in Kinshasa Monday, charged by U.S. President Bill Clinton with convincing Mr. Mobutu and Mr. Kabila to meet face to face.

Mr. Richardson's hectic shuttle began in earnest early Tuesday, when he met Mr. Mobutu at the president's residence in Kinshasa's heavily-guarded Tshatshi Military Camp.

After 90 minutes of what he called a "very frank" meeting, he left the capital for Lubumbashi, Zaire's rebel-held second city, where he was due later Tuesday to meet Mr. Kabila.

On Wednesday, Mr. Richardson is to meet U.N. and relief workers in and around the northeast city of Kisangani, also held by the rebels, to assess the plight of tens of thousands

of Rwandan Hutu refugees there.

Later the same day, he is expected back in Kinshasa for another meeting with Mr. Mobutu.

And Thursday, Mr. Richardson will fly on to Angola, although he has refused to say why.

The thrust of his diplomatic shuttle is to get Mr. Mobutu and Mr. Kabila to fix a set date and place for talks, "the sooner the better."

Meanwhile, President Nelson Mandela was very excited Tuesday at what he termed as a "major breakthrough" in Zairean peace efforts — an agreed venue for a summit between Zaire's president and rebel leader, Mandela's spokesman said.

Presidential spokesman Joel Netshitenzhe said Mr. Mandela was "very excited" that President Mobutu and Mr. Kabila had agreed to meet at an unnamed venue — said to be a South African naval vessel in international waters, the domestic South African news agency reported.

"(Mandela) sees this latest development as a major breakthrough in the process," Mr. Netshitenzhe said.

The 78-year old South African statesman will chair the meeting, which will likely take place later this week, Mr. Netshitenzhe further confirmed.

South Africa's Foreign Ministry announced in a prepared statement Tuesday morning that the Zairean sides had agreed on a summit venue, after weeks of direct and informal negotiations.

The Zaireans were still finalising a date for the planned meeting, the statement added.

In a separate development, rebel forces advancing from the east claimed Tuesday to have overrun Kikwit, 450 kilometres east of Kinshasa, the capital's last important line of defence.

"The fighting lasted several hours," rebel spokesman Lambert Kabuji said at the insurgents' base in the country's second city Lubumbashi.

He said the rebels had taken the airport, five kilometres outside Kikwit, but gave no other details.

The fall of Kikwit would be a serious blow to President Mobutu's beleaguered regime.

The town lies on a major strategic road junction and is a key centre for food deliveries to the capital.

Earlier Tuesday, Zairean Information Minister Kin Key Mulumba had denied reports that rebels had entered parts of Kikwit.

Suspected Hutu extremists massacre 22 in Rwanda

KIGALI (AFP) — Suspected Hutu militiamen have massacred 22 people, including 17 girl students and a Belgian nun, in a new ethnic attack in Rwanda, national radio reported Tuesday.

"Armed bandits" burst in to a business and accountancy training school for young women at Muramba in Gisenyi province, in the northwest, at 1:00 a.m. Monday morning (2300 GMT Sunday) and tried to have the students separate into Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups.

The radio said that when the young women refused, the attackers machine-gunned them, killing 17 students, a Belgian nun who ran the training college for student teachers in Muramba, and four civilians who lived nearby.

Fourteen people were wounded, nine of them seriously. The radio added that shooting took place between soldiers of the Tutsi-dominated army and the suspected Hutu

extremists before the assault on the college, but the Rwandan Information Agency said troops intervened when the gang tried to attack a second school.

The Belgian nun was named as Margarita Bosmans, 62.

"She tried perhaps to intervene. She was known for her bravery," said a Rwandan civil servant who knew Bosmans, who had lived in the troubled central African nation for more than 30 years.

The Belgian embassy in Kigali stated that Bosmans had run the teacher training college for 20 years and would be buried in Muramba Monday.

Security forces captured one of the attackers, the radio said.

Students who survived the attack asked to be allowed to return to their homes, but the local district administrator asked them to remain at the college and promised security measures to protect them.

The attack Monday night followed the murder in Kigali Sunday of the chief editor of a privately owned bi-monthly magazine, Appolos Hakizimana, by two unidentified gunmen who shot him in the head, but did not harm a relative who was with him.

National radio reported that journalists asked to meet the minister of information Monday to protest and press him to open an enquiry.

The association Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF — Doctors Without Borders) wrote a letter to President Pasteur Bizimungu asking for arrests, a trial and convictions.

RSF said that Hakizimana, who edited the Umuramba magazine, had been arrested on July 30 last year and accused of being a member of the Interahamwe Hutu extremist, held responsible with former government troops for the genocide of more than half a million Tutsis and moder-

ate Hutus in 1994.

Hakizimana was released three weeks later.

The letter said that RSF, "without making judgement on the substance of the affair, condemns this crime against a media professional."

Since last year, two attacks by armed gangs who asked their victims to separate into ethnic groups took place in northern and eastern Rwanda.

Rwanda erupted into a brutal civil war in April 1994, before a Tutsi rebel front routed the Interahamwe and the then Hutu army and seized the capital Kigali in July.

More than a million Hutus fled across the western border into Zaire, but hundreds of thousands of the refugees returned home late last year when a Tutsi-dominated Zairean rebel alliance began an uprising in which they have since taken more than half the country.

Those to return included ex-government troops and militiamen.

A suggestion regular meetings be held between the foreign and defence ministers of the two countries, like those of Australia and the United States.

Mr. Hashimoto arrived here Monday on a two day visit aimed at enhancing the political alliance of the two close trading partners and boosting Australia's regional profile.

The two also announced agreement to formalise annual prime ministerial summits.

Mr. Howard also rejected

Australia and Japan to step up defence dialogue

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australia and Japan are to step up cooperation on regional defence and security as part of an agreement to enhance their political and economic alliance, leaders of the two countries announced Tuesday.

Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and Australian counterpart John Howard attempted to avoid upsetting their neighbours by stressing there would be no dramatic build-up in military cooperation.

But the defence relation-

ship of the two countries, which fought each other during World War II, would be encouraged to evolve "step by step," the leaders told reporters in a joint press conference.

"We share the view that Japan and Australia should further promote cooperation on regional security through the senior level political-military consultations," Mr. Hashimoto said through an interpreter.

As a first step, Australian Defence Minister Ian Maclean is to visit Japan soon.

Beijing was angered last year by Canberra's moves to boost its defence alliance with the United States, which China saw as aimed at containment of its growing military and economic power.

But in a gesture possibly aimed at reassuring Beijing, Mr. Hashimoto reaffirmed efforts "to realise the accession of China to the WTO and to further incorporate China into the world community as a constructive member of it."

Mr. Howard also rejected

a suggestion regular meetings be held between the foreign and defence ministers of the two countries, like those of Australia and the United States.

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U.S. to assert its role in discussing NATO charter with Russia

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will try to move negotiations on a Russia-NATO charter forward this week in a hastily arranged trip to Moscow also aimed at containing European involvement in the effort.

Mrs. Albright is set to arrive in the Russian capital Thursday for meetings with Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, who is recovering from gallstone surgery. The State Department already has cautioned that remaining differences in the way of signing the charter will not be resolved during this trip, Mrs. Albright's second to Moscow since taking office in January.

"Our hope (is) that we might make progress with the Russians to complete the negotiations at some point this spring, certainly not this week," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said Monday.

Talks on the charter, which could be signed be-

fore NATO announces in July which Central European countries it plans to take in, are to resume between Mr. Primakov and NATO Secretary General Javier Solana on May 6 in Luxembourg.

Negotiations have run into complications over Russian demands that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) guarantee in the charter that nuclear weapons or foreign troops will not be deployed on the territories of new member-states.

Mrs. Albright last week made it clear Washington will not allow NATO to make any commitment beyond a statement proclaiming that it does not intend to change its current nuclear or conventional posture in Central Europe.

"Russia would ... like us to make commitments to the charter about nuclear and conventional deployments on the territory of new members," Mrs. Albright told senators last week.

"We will not compromise on this issue," she vowed.

The United States last year proposed that Moscow, former headquarters of the Warsaw Pact, sign a charter with NATO to formalise ties between the two Cold War-era enemies.

The document will allow Russia's concerns over a bigger NATO that will begin to take shape at a summit in Madrid in July when the 16 leaders of the military alliance pick new members.

Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary are the frontrunners for early NATO entry.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin has said the charter should be ready for signing on May 27 in Paris although a final agreement has not yet been reached on the document.

Mr. Yeltsin's announcement following talks in Paris with President Jacques Chirac and in Bonn with Chancellor Helmut Kohl set off alarm bells among offi-

cials here who are concerned the Europeans are seeking to steer the course of the Russia-NATO relationship.

Mrs. Albright's decision to travel to Moscow, announced one day after consulting her top advisers, took most by surprise and underscored Washington's desire to play the leading role in the drive.

Enlarging NATO is Mr. Clinton's top foreign policy priority for his second term.

Mrs. Albright's deputy Strobe Talbott left Monday for Brussels to meet with NATO officials before travelling to Moscow to join Mrs. Albright on her visit.

Mrs. Talbott was to return to Brussels Friday to brief the North Atlantic Council on the talks with the Russians.

Mrs. Albright also is expected to touch on the delay by the Russian Duma to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention, which the U.S. Senate here approved last week.

'Annihilation fountain' found at Milky Way centre

WILLIAMSBURG, VA. (R) — An "annihilation fountain" has been discovered spurting up from the centre of the Milky Way galaxy, astronomers reported.

The fountain, which may be evidence of a region of exploding stars or the winds around a black hole, is made up of the hot gas that results when bits of matter and anti-matter meet and destroy each other, the scientists said.

Such warring particles were expected on the Milky Way's galactic plain, where Earth and our solar system reside, but never before has a huge plume of anti-matter been detected hovering above the galaxy.

To detect the fountain, scientists used data gathered by the orbiting Compton Gamma Ray Observatory, launched by NASA in 1991. Unlike the Hubble space telescope, which uses visible light to see heavenly phenomena, the Compton craft tracks gamma rays, the most highly energetic particles of light.

The Milky Way's centre is about 25,000 light years from Earth and cannot be observed by normal telescopes using visible light because gas and dust get in the way, but gamma rays can "see" through gas and dust to the galaxy's heart.

Packing about 250,000 times the energy of normal visible light, gamma rays are produced when anti-matter and matter collide. Anti-matter is thought to be relatively rare in the universe, because whenever it meets up with matter, annihilation occurs and gamma rays result.

Scientists looking at the Milky Way fountain wondered where the anti-matter that fuelled the galactic geyser came from, considering this among other questions at a symposium in Williamsburg, Virginia.

"My opinion is that there's furious activity which is boiling hot clouds of gas through our galaxy's centre," Charles Dermer, a researcher at the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, told a news conference.

"It's the inner city of our galaxy," he said. "We live in a rather quiet suburb and here we have much more action."

Mr. Dermer and other scientists at the conference disagree about the source of the anti-matter spewing upward. Mr. Dermer and his colleagues believe it could be a "funeral pyre" of dead stars, burning for the last 100,000 to one million years.

Powell, Mrs. Clinton to close volunteer summit

PHILADELPHIA (R) — Retired General Colin Powell and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton were expected to wrap up a three-day "summit" on volunteerism Tuesday with an appeal to delegates to realise its lofty goals.

"Tomorrow is about the future," summit spokesman David Dix said. Referring to the summit's goals of helping 2 million of an estimated 15 million disadvantaged children by the year 2000, Mr. Dix said: "We're going to keep track."

Gen. Powell and Mrs. Clinton are to address an hour-long closing ceremony at Philadelphia's Independence Hall, beginning at 12:30 p.m. est.

Before that, delegations from some 150 American communities are to meet in state-by-state groups to complete plans for meeting summit goals.

Those goals are for volunteers to help children receive adequate health care and education, safe places for after-school activities, a relationship with a caring adult and opportunities for community service.

A study prepared for summit organisers estimated that an additional 1 million Americans donating about one day per week of time, which represents a 2-3 per cent increase in overall volunteerism, would be needed to meet the goals.

The estimated 1,500 local delegates and 250 state delegates met Monday in small groups to exchange ideas on how to bolster volunteerism.

Nick Mork, a delegate from Wichita, Kansas, said representatives of his city

developed a plan to convene a local version of the volunteer summit, bringing together civic leaders and "grass roots" activists.

He said representatives from other cities contributed ideas, such as a mentoring programme in Birmingham, Alabama, for youth expelled from school for carrying weapons, or a mentoring programme in Reno for children of families living in temporary shelters.

President Bill Clinton, who spent two days at the summit and was joined by former presidents George Bush, Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, returned to the White House on Monday afternoon.

During a visit to George Washington Nebringer Elementary School before he left, Mr. Clinton urged the youth of the country to get involved in volunteering.

"If all young people serve, we can turn this country around and put it in the right direction for every single child in America," he said.

The White House was embarrassed by a Washington Post report Monday that only a few members of Mr. Clinton's staff devote time to volunteering.

"I think it's less structured than maybe it could be, and the White House will consider some ways of putting a little more structure in the effort to encourage volunteerism," White House spokesman Mike McCurry said when asked about the report.

Mr. McCurry said he "would take some issue" with the report. "There are a surprising number of people at the White House who do respond and are involved," he said.

Pentagon review 'could lead to troops cut'

NEW YORK (R) — A strategic defence review by the Pentagon could lead to a reduction in U.S. troops, especially in the army, and lower air force and navy budgets for high-technology jet fighters, the New York Times said Tuesday.

Tens of thousands of U.S. troops could be cut, helping to fund a new generation of weapons the newspaper said, citing officials involved in preparing the so-called quadrennial defence review.

With the release of the review, expected to be made public next month, U.S. military strategy could shift, the newspaper said.

In particular, there could be changes in the doctrine which now mandates the

U.S. military be prepared to fight two large regional wars about the same time, the Times said.

Pentagon officials were quoted in the newspaper as saying the army might be asked to cut back its 495,000 active-duty troops by as many as 50,000.

"Everything is on the table," Gen. John Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was quoted as saying. "For this process to be credible, you have to be able to show that you've considered all the options."

While the army is expected to have to make the biggest cuts, other services would also be asked to curtail their budgets for new fighter planes, the newspaper said.

Reductions would help pay for new battlefield equipment, like computerised artillery systems and biological-weapons detectors, the newspaper said.

An independent panel would review the Defence Department's findings after they are released, then Congress would consider both reports while studying the military budget.

Congress had ordered the defence review.

Mad dogs nip at heels of U.K. beef row

LONDON (R) — The British government said its scientists had found dogs were susceptible to mad cow disease but denied it had covered up the findings, which a spokeswoman described as "insignificant."

Scientists critical of the way the government had handled the mad cow crisis accused it of deliberately hiding the study and said it was important for understanding mad cow disease.

The debate over the dog study worsens the crisis over bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or mad cow disease), already the cause of tension between the government and the European Union.

The Independent newspaper reported that government veterinarians had studied the brains of 444 bunting hounds in 1991 and found they could be infected with BSE.

Doctors believe cattle got BSE from feed made using

the ground-up remains of sheep infected with scrapie, their own version of the brain-destroying illness. Dogs would presumably get it from dog food that used infected beef products.

A spokeswoman for the Agriculture Ministry confirmed the Independent report but said there were "no ethical grounds" to research the matter further.

"It is unnecessary in terms of human health and in terms of animal health," she said.

Last year British scientists said they had found a new variant of the human version of the disease, Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) and said it probably came from eating infected beef.

The European Union immediately banned the export of all British beef products.

Microbiologist Richard Lacey, who has been critical of the government's handling of the BSE epidemic

in cattle, said the research on dogs could be important.

"Whenever you get a disease of this sort it takes on the properties of the host it's in. It's possible dogs develop a disease of this sort that, because it is in a new host, is slightly different," Dr. Lacey said in a telephone interview.

He added: "The more we know about it the better."

Dr. Lacey accused the government of deliberately hiding its findings. "It's part of a cover-up. They've only published the minimum they had to on BSE throughout in order to produce as little as possible for people to worry about."

Other animals are known to get spongiform brain diseases from infected beef — including cats, Antelope, mink, ostriches and a range of other animals have also developed their own versions of the deadly, brain-wasting disease.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation

Established 1975

مؤسسة الصحافة الأردنية

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Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

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The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.
Subscription and advertising rates are available from the
Jordan Times advertising department.

Painful, but necessary reforms

JORDAN, LIKE many Third World countries, suffers from chronic administrative, economic and management ills. The government bureaucracy especially has been long identified as not only inefficient and incompetent but also as a major impediment to societal progress. The problems which plague the bureaucracy are multi-faceted and multi-layered. Most importantly, the interconnectedness between education, culture and internal politics on the one hand and civil service on the other intensify the problem.

The educational process, for example, provides the government with manpower. But that manpower, taught and trained by the same outdated bureaucracy, is, itself, poor and inefficient. Meanwhile, the present administrative culture, inherited from the days of Ottoman rule, still considers government employees as rulers rather than servants of the people. Laws and regulations, also based on Ottoman jurisprudence, still accord civil servants greater powers, including the power to collect taxes, that make them a burden on the country's financial resources.

This last prodigy is compounded by the state's conception of itself as the sole provider of the people. The Constitution confers upon the state the responsibility to provide work for Jordanians "through directing the national economy," something that the state did but ineffectively.

To undo what the decades have wrought, the above-mentioned areas must be addressed. While the political decision to avert the state from being the sole provider seems to have been taken, the mechanism for translating that decision into concrete plans still eludes us.

Surely it should not create hardships for current employees nor should it create anxiety and fear. But its parameters, its cultural context, must be clarified for current and aspiring employees, and for the society at large to comprehend and endure. The parameters of reform are for science and management consultants to design. The new culture, based on the values of compassion and social cohesion, are for the leadership to develop and for writers and community leaders to articulate and propagate.

While administrative reforms are very much interrelated to political and economic reforms, the former takes precedence as only an efficient and modern administration can affect the latter. While the beginnings have been modest so far we are heartened by the leadership's determination to see the process through.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Dustour called for Iran and the Arab states to join hands in the course of fending off the common U.S.-Israeli threats and possible aggression levelled against the Arab and Islamic Nation. Ahmad Bursan said that the Arabs and the Iranians are in the same boat, facing common foes, the U.S. and Israel, both of which pressuring Europe to boycott Iran and weaken its military power, intent on maintaining the embargo on Iraq and using the veto at the U.N. Security Council to kill resolutions condemning Israel's practices in Jerusalem and other Palestinian areas. The writer said that the Israelis refuse to comply with U.N. resolutions and the U.S. is giving it all the encouragement it can and all the economic and military might to resist any pressure from the Arabs. He added that at the same time, Israel and the United States are intent on strengthening their military cooperation with Turkey, in a bid to encircle the Arab states and weaken them to the benefit of the Jewish state. The Arabs and the Iranians, he said, should not only join hands in the face of the common U.S.-Israeli alliance directed at them they should also join forces against Turkey if that country chooses to direct aggression on the Arab Nation.

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily said Tuesday that Labour Day, on May 1 each year, is a reminder to the world governments and nations of the importance of the workers' efforts towards achieving prosperity for their country. But unfortunately, the world today witnesses a worsening of the workers' living conditions, especially in the Third World countries where they are more often than not exposed to acts of blackmail, receive low wages, do not enjoy social security and where the children are exploited as workers in difficult jobs for meagre wages without any regard to their human rights, said Yousef Abdullah Mahmoud. What we hope to see, said the writer, is real effort on the part of the governments to protect the workers' rights and interests and give them security for old age and disability; we hope to see an end to exploiting children who ought to be attending school and we demand that concerned institutions rally to the support of these rights, added the writer.

The Washington Watch

The battle of a pro-Israel Congress 'requires an informed and outraged public if it is to be won'

By Dr. James Zogby

THE FUTURE of the Middle East peace process hangs in the balance, awaiting action by the Clinton administration. It is clear that without pressure from the U.S. the process is at a standstill and may collapse.

There is a great deal of discussion in Washington about what the administration can or will do. A few weeks ago, there was some talk of a dramatic U.S. initiative. That talk has diminished somewhat, due to Netanyahu's insistence that there be no compromise on the Jabal Abu Ghneim settlement and the Palestinian refusal to accept anything less than a cessation of construction at that site.

The Israeli prime minister's recent legal troubles have cast an additional pall over the process. He has emerged from the crisis emboldened but weakened. Netanyahu appears now to be more indebted to the far right of his coalition and, therefore, not at all inclined to any new initiatives that might require compromise.

While distressed at this turn of events, many U.S. officials, even those known to be pro-Israel, are privately speaking with impatience about the prime minister. Some even warn of an impending clash between the U.S. and Israel.

Despite acknowledgement that it will require such a confrontation, it is unclear whether or not the administration will risk such a clash, especially given its domestic U.S. electoral and political repercussions. And even if the administration finds the political will to directly challenge the Likud policies, the story will not end there. Any challenge this Democratic president poses to Israel will be met by a hostile confrontation with the Republican-led Congress.

The ability to use Congress as a lever against administration pressure has always been a key aspect of Israel's U.S. strategy. This has been true whether the two branches of government were of the same party or not. It is especially true now when this Republican leadership is so wedded to the Likud Party and its policies.

Historical examples abound. During the Gulf war, when

President George Bush pressed Israel to defer to the U.S.-led coalition effort against Iraq and not take any unilateral actions, Yitzhak Shamir was outraged. In an Israeli press interview, Shamir was reported to have said that he found the U.S. administration's pressure to be unacceptable and threatened to use "our friends in Congress" against Bush. Many believe that it was this that led to the clash over the loan guarantees.

Similarly, before his first visit to the U.S. after being elected prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu was advised to court Congress against the administration as a way to ward off any administration pressure that might be placed on his government.

Israel's leaders can make such threats or develop such strategies because of the influence that pro-Israeli groups exercise on Congress. Their sway over Congress is a function of well-developed and, I feel, overrated perception they have created that they can defeat any candidate who turns against them.

Through intimidation they have been able to use Congress to limit administration's flexibility or even to impose their own foreign initiatives on the administration — as they did in 1995 with the Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act.

So as the administration and public debate the next steps to take in the peace process, pro-Israel groups and their allies in Congress are quietly orchestrating an effort that will further Israel's aims and further damage the search for Middle East peace.

As in recent years, this congressional assault is taking place on three fronts: increasing aid to Israel, above the allotted \$3 billion in military and economic aid; placing new restrictions on U.S. aid to the Palestinians; and passing other legislative initiatives that will serve Israeli policy objectives.

Some add-ons to Israel's aid occur as a result of agreements that Israel has reached with the administration. In other instances, congressional initiatives are responsible for creat-

ing special programmes or benefits for Israel. In different years these have included: a U.S.-Israel Science and Technology programme funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce; a programme funded by the Department of Agriculture; hundreds of millions in special Defence Department joint programmes; special add-ons for Soviet Jewish refugees; and a bizarre extra bonus to help Israel create a foreign aid programme of its own.

What is interesting about these congressionally driven add-ons is how easily they are accepted and passed, despite congressional concerns with balancing the overall budget. Very few opposition voices are ever heard regarding Israeli add-ons. Some members support these projects hoping to gain additional support from the pro-Israeli Jewish community; some support these efforts out of the fear that if they do not, these same forces will turn against them; and some actually do support these programmes because they are deeply committed to Israel and believe that they are doing what must be done to support Israel.

Most members of Congress, however, simply accept these power plays by the supporters of Israel and allow them to pass because they accept their passage as inevitable and, absent any counterpressure, they feel powerless to stop them.

In total, during the past two years these add-ons have yielded over \$1.2 billion in extra U.S. assistance to Israel.

While increasing aid on the Israeli side, beyond the \$3 billion allotted, there are also efforts under way in Congress to either suspend aid to the Palestinians or to add more restrictions to their \$75 million aid package.

There have been repeated efforts to block Palestinian aid ever since the programme was first announced four years ago. This year's effort may be the strongest to date.

In previous years, the administration has weighed in heavily to protect the Palestinian aid programme and they were supported by

the Labour-led government of Israel. Both would vouch for the Palestinian's need and support the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA) efforts to comply with the peace accords.

This year, the administration's efforts will most likely be met with strong congressional opposition and support from the government of Israel cannot be guaranteed. It is also not clear whether or not the pro-Israel lobby will support Palestinian aid if the Likud-led government of Israel is opposed to continuing the programme.

The right wing and pro-Likud supporters in Congress appear to be in no mood to listen to either the administration or supporters of the peace process. For weeks they have been echoing Israeli charges that PNA President Yasser Arafat gave a "green light" to terrorism. Based on this charge, many members of Congress are calling for a suspension of the Palestinian aid programme.

Currently, a number of letters are circulating in Congress, collecting endorsements calling on the president to suspend Palestinian aid. Last week, Republican Majority leader Newt Gingrich asked a Republican member of the House International Relations Committee to propose legislation calling for further restrictions on aid to the PNA.

It is still possible that the administration will prevail in its efforts to convince Congress to continue the Palestinian programmes — but it will be a difficult battle.

If these battles to increase Israeli aid and cut or further restrict the Palestinian programme were not enough to present a great challenge for the administration and supporters of Middle East peace, there are other initiatives that may pose even more difficult threats ahead.

Some members are actually proposing punitive aid cuts against Egypt because of what they term "its obstructionist role in the peace process" and to punish Egypt's leaders for not speaking out against anti-Israel cartoons that have

appeared in Egypt's newspapers.

Should the hitherto sacrosanct Egyptian aid package be tampered with, this would cause the administration and the peace process a serious problem.

At the same time, not satisfied with the damage they have done by legislating moving the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, some members have succeeded in further complicating the problem. Since the administration has used a "national security waiver" to stall the embassy move, Congress is intent on forcing the administration's hand with more punitive legislation. In an amendment added to the State Department Authorisation Bill (the legislation that funds all U.S. Department activities) Congress is now proposing that: \$25 million of the State Department budget in 1998 must be set aside for the Jerusalem embassy construction; that none of the State Department funds can be spent in the Jerusalem consulate unless the consulate is brought under the direct supervision of the U.S. ambassador to Israel; and that the State Department cannot spend monies on any publication which lists countries and their capitals unless they state that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel.

What Israel's supporters in Congress hope to accomplish with such efforts is to press the administration to bend further in Israel's direction to back off against any pressure against the Likud government.

The battleground for Middle East peace is as much here in Washington and the Congress as it is in the Middle East. It is clear from recent polls that the U.S. public would not support such congressional antics, but absent a major campaign to inform the public and challenge the Congress, the efforts of the pro-Israel forces will do their damage. The administration will fight back and Arab Americans and allies of the peace process will fight as well — but the battle requires an informed and outraged public if it is to be won.

Alliances around Taleban can benefit no one

By Wynne Dyer

THE SNOWS are melting in the passes of Afghanistan, and the fundamentalist Taleban militia who seized Kabul last September will soon be moving north to complete their conquest of the country. Another chapter of the Great Game is closing — which means that the next is beginning.

The struggle to control the strategic crossroads of Afghanistan was first called the Great Game in the 19th century, when the Britons in India played it against Russians encroaching from the north. Now the British are gone, but the same panem of intervention and alliances continue.

The next round of the game involves a realignment of the alliances that came together after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979: the U.S., Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on the one side, India, Russia and Iran on the other. But this time, the fragile new countries of Central Asia may be dragged into the chaos as well.

All this is far beyond the ken of the ragged soldiers of the Taleban, a force of only ten thousands mostly illiterate young men who have captured three-quarters of Afghanistan since late 1994.

All they know is that they obey Muhammad Omar Akhund (now known as "King of the Believers"), a senior mullah from Kandahar in his late thirties, who lost an eye fighting the Russians. And all the rest of the world notices is that they are religious fanatics of the most radically conservative kind.

In areas captured by the Taleban, trees are festooned with smashed TV sets strung together with miles of magnetic tape torn from audio and video cassettes. Men are compelled to grow beards, and music, films and even kite-flying are banned as un-Islamic. Women are not allowed to work or even to

appear in the street without wearing a tent-like garment called burqa. All schools for girls have been closed down.

The blind extremism of the Taleban has provoked strong criticism in Iran, where Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati accused them last year of "defaming Islam" because of their "fossilised policies." But they know no better: What they are actually doing is recreating the harsh life they knew in the refugee camps of north-west Pakistan, which is where most of them grew up.

In the camps there was no entertainment and no education, even for boys, except the rote learning of large parts of the Koran in Arabic, a language none of them understood. So it now makes perfect sense to them.

In the same way, the Taleban attitude towards women is driven not so much by Islam as by the traditions of the villages and small towns of southern, Pashto-speaking Afghanistan, where women are little more than house-slaves. The only thing that can be said in the Taleban's favour is that they do bring a kind of order to the areas they have conquered.

So why are they so generously supported by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United States? Between the money the Taleban get from their foreign supporters and the money they earn from exporting heroin (the Afghan opium crop has tripled in the past four years, and now accounts for half of global production), they hardly ever have to fight as they advance. They just bribe the opposition commanders into quitting.

For Pakistan, the reason to back the Taleban is strategic. The powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) wants to install a friendly and subservient government in Kabul, and for that purpose it regards the Pashto tribes of the south as more amenable than the Tajiks and Uzbeks of the north, who have

strong ties with the republics of former Soviet Central Asia.

For Washington and Riyadh, the logic in backing the Taleban is even simpler: anything that is bad for Iran, they reason, is good for the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. The Taleban follow the Sunni path of Islam, not the Shiite, so they are violently hostile to Shiite Iran.

The line-up on the other side is even simpler to explain. Iran fears the victimisation of Afghanistan's Shiite minority and the extension of Pakistan's power to its own frontier. Russia fears the destabilisation of Central Asia. India fears that bored Taleban, after victory in Afghanistan, will find a new cause to fight for in the predominantly Muslim Indian state of Kashmir.

There is virtually no chance that the Taleban can be stopped from rolling over the nine northern provinces of Afghanistan that they do not already control in the next month or so. The alliance between Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum and Tajik militia leader Ahmad Shah Massoud has almost entirely broken down, and the morale of their forces verges on hopelessness.

That is why Dostum's forces did the unthinkable in January and blew the bridges south of the Salang tunnel, for 30 years the only link between Kabul and the northern provinces in winter. But as soon as spring reopens the old road over the Hindu Kush, the Taleban will be on him again, and he does not have a prayer.

The question is what happens next. The ethnic groups are the same on both sides of the frontier: Masood's fighter and transport planes are already operating out of Tajikistan, and both Russia and Iran are helping Dostum with money and arms.

There is little likelihood that the fighting will stop when the Taleban close up to the northern frontier with Turkmenistan,

Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Even if they do not try to push any further, their brand of Islam and their language make them unwelcome interlopers in the north, and their intolerance will soon stimulate local resistance.

In these circumstances, the best that can be expected is a

continuing low-level conflict across Afghanistan's northern border. The worst is a great deal worse: the toppling of all Central Asia into the kind of chaos that has swept both the Caucasus and the Balkans in the past five years. It is hard to see how that can benefit either the U.S. or Pakistan.

LETTERS

Cause worth supporting

To the Editor:

I WAS sorry that you chose a misleading reference to Britain to open your otherwise welcome editorial on April 26 about the importance of countering Islamophobia. The truth is that Britain is a multicultural country with an excellent record for respecting the rights of its minorities. We share your concerns about the need for joint action against prejudice.

There are over a million practising Muslims living in Britain who enjoy complete freedom of worship in some 1,000 mosques across the country. This right is enshrined in British law. As is their right to maintain separate traditions and customs, choose the type of education they want for their children or lobby to represent their interests. Discrimination because of a person's religious beliefs is a criminal offence.

Many Muslim families have chosen Britain as their home for several generations now. Muslim communities are vibrant and confident. Muslims are active and successful in all walks of life, whether in government, business, academia or the arts. Some of our readers may have visited the "Muslims in Britain" exhibition at the British Council in Amman last summer. This gave some idea about the important role which Muslims have played and continue to play in enriching British life. The respect of Muslims for law, justice and family values is in two respected and widely admired in Britain.

In addition to Britain's own Muslim community, many Muslims from the Middle East and elsewhere have chosen to make Britain their home, or the centre of their business and cultural activities.

They are welcome guests.

Of course prejudice is a threat in every society, and all of us share a duty to counter it. The Prince of Wales and the British government share with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and the government of Jordan a determination to counter Islamophobia in all its forms. We will continue to work with our Jordanian friends and others to promote inter-faith studies and mutual respect, tolerance and understanding in our societies.

C C R Battiscombe,
HM Ambassador,
Amman.OCCUR
TO METhe sure
cure

By Ali Kassay

I HATE antibiotics. This is partly because one always resorts to them at times of fever, runny noses, listlessness and the other symptoms of flu which are extremely unwelcome, except for listlessness, a state that I, along with the bureaucracy regard as noble. In particular, I loathe antibiotics because they compel me to suffer from acute sobriety until I have completed the course of medication.

In addition to these grounds for my unashamed hatred, when I was prescribed a course of antibiotics some time ago, I had reason for my repugnance and indignation to rise to an unprecedented level of intensity. You see, with the ennu that generally accompanies the absence of good health, I poured the contents of the tub of medication into a saucer, arranged the pills in a variety of neat geometric shapes, some of which were quite imaginative, and then decided to count them. There were unmistakably nineteen, whereas the label announced twenty.

A foreigner reading this would not understand where lies the reason for my vehement consternation. After all, mistakes can happen despite the best intentions of the manufacturer, and to correct this error one needs only write a letter to the producer explaining the situation, to receive a polite apology and a new container to replace the defective one. This is exactly what I, myself, have done on occasions in the years of my life that I spent in the land of the perfidious imperialist infidels, away from our fair and beloved land.

Now that I am back in the fold, new considerations must be borne in mind. If I write such a letter, will it reach its destination? After all, our postal services are famous for their imaginative interpretation of the written address. Not very long ago, I received a letter addressed to a post office box bearing the same number as mine, but situated in Sana'a, Yemen, not Amman, Jordan. Even when I returned it to the post officer and explained the confusion, the system stood its ground with refreshing tenacity and returned the same letter to my post office box two days later.

Even assuming that the letter makes its way to its destination, what will become of it then? You see, in an important institution such as a pharmaceutical plant, decisions are too important to be entrusted to mere underlings. Only one man has that power, or at the extreme, he may share part of it with his son. Consequently, staff, regardless of their titles, have developed the practice of presenting any situation that may arise in a manner as neutral as possible, so that, at the first indication of the direction to which the boss man's opinion will swing, they would automatically state categorically that this is exactly their assessment of the situation. Moreover, they would hunt the moments when the chief is in a "bonhomous" mood to propose to him things of importance like the employment of a cousin. A letter of complaint would either mar such a precious occasion or make a bad one worse. Therefore, it is most likely to make its way to the "to be overlooked by events" file, or to that wonder of modern technology, the shredder.

Still, the perennial optimism that is so important for life in the Third World raises its head and finds a silver lining. After all, there was only one pill missing, and those that were there succeeded in curing the malady. At least, they did not make it worse.

Study shows three-fold increase in number of anti-Muslim incidents

WASHINGTON — The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a Washington-based Islamic advocacy group, on April 21 released its second annual report on the American Muslim experience, called "The Status of Muslim Civil Rights in the United States." The report, produced by the CAIR Research Centre, details almost 250 incidents and experiences of anti-Muslim violence, discrimination, stereotyping, bias and harassment; a three-fold increase over the previous year. These incidents ranged from Muslim women being fired from their jobs for wearing religiously-mandated headscarves to harassment of Muslim children because

of their religion and reports of discriminatory treatment of Muslim air travellers. The report's findings showed several trends, including: 1) The number of violent anti-Muslim incidents decreased (to 35 per cent from 50 per cent). 2) The number of incidents resulting from discrimination and bias, particularly discrimination in the workplace, jumped sharply (from 50 per cent to 65 per cent). Many incidents of workplace discrimination involved accommodation of religious practices such as dress and prayer. Another emerging category of discrimination is allegedly unfair treatment of Muslim air travellers (19 incidents).

The report also demonstrated that American Muslims are becoming more willing to defend their rights. In the past year, Muslims established precedents for religious diversity in the workplace, in schools, in government institutions and even in the military. In some cases, these precedents were established in the courts. (The report described one Muslim worker who was recently awarded almost \$3 million for discrimination in the workplace). As a result of this increased level of activism, about 10 per cent of the experiences discussed in this report represent victories in terms of the American Muslim community's quest for tolerance, justice

and religious freedom.

The majority of the experiences documented in the report dealt with public perceptions of Muslims and how these perceptions influenced acts of bias. More than half (53 per cent) of those reporting anti-Muslim incidents cited religious practices, such as dress or prayer, as factors which lead to discrimination. The other major identifying factors were ethnicity (32 per cent) and identification with the Muslim community (14 per cent).

CAIR researchers say negative portrayals of Islam in the media were a major factor in perpetuating bias against Muslims. "It is this media stereotyping, coupled with distorted

images of Muslims and Islam in popular culture, that is often cited in cases of anti-Muslim discrimination," said Dr. Mohammad Nimer, director of the CAIR Research Centre and author of the report. Dr. Nimer also cautioned that, because this type of research is so new, it may take several years to establish a benchmark for accurately measuring increases and decreases from one year to the next.

The backgrounds of people reporting negative incidents reflected the diverse nature of the American Muslim community. Arabs or Arab-Americans made up the largest segment of those reporting incidents (43 per cent), followed by African-Americans (25 per

cent) and then by people whose families came from the Indian subcontinent (17 per cent). Complaints were also received from Muslims of European heritage (8 per cent).

CAIR began documenting anti-Muslim incidents following the 1995 attack on the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. In the first few days after that attack, American Muslims reported more than 200 incidents of harassment, discrimination and actual violence.

(There are an estimated 6 million Muslims in this country and some 1.2 billion worldwide. Demographers say Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in America).

Egypt — women targeted by association

EGYPT HAS been under a state of emergency since the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981 and the bleak picture of its human rights record is widely blamed on the emergency legislation provisions which have permitted arbitrary detention, facilitated systematic torture and provided for executive approval of courts' decisions.

Thousands of members and suspected members of illegal Islamist groups have been detained without charge or trial, some for more than seven years, and torture has been used systematically against detainees. Moreover, since the end of 1992, when President Hosni Mubarak started issuing special decrees referring civilians for trial by military courts whose procedures are grossly unfair, 74 people have been sentenced to death by these courts and 54 executions have been carried out.

Armed Islamist groups, whose confrontation with the security forces has since 1992 claimed the lives of more than 1,000 people from both sides, have also been responsible for grave human rights abuses. Scores of civilians, including Coptic Christians, tourists and a well-known writer, have been deliberately killed by these groups, particularly Al Gamaa Al Islamiyyah (Islamic Group) and Al Jihad (Holy Struggle).

Amnesty International, Egyptian human rights groups and other international human rights organisations have over the years published numerous reports documenting human rights violations in Egypt and have made detailed recommendations to the Egyptian government to take concrete steps to remedy the situation, but these recommendations have been ignored. On the contrary, the Egyptian minister of the interior has accused local and international human rights groups of "lying and conducting a psychological war against the country's police" adding that "Egypt is one of the countries that respects human rights and does not approve of torture."

Against this backdrop, dozens of women have been subjected to human rights violations, although their plight has seldom been publicised. They have been victims of arbitrary detention and torture, usually solely by reason of their marital or other family relationships. Members of the security forces, especially the State Security Investigations Department (SSI), have often taken wives and female relatives of Islamist activists effectively as hostages, especially in Upper Egypt, when they did not find the men wanted for arrest. They released these hostages usually after the person sought has given himself up to the police.

Some wives of imprisoned leaders are repeatedly harassed by the security forces. They are routinely visited by SSI officers and their homes searched without warrant. In some cases, they are arbitrarily arrested, taken to an SSI building and ill-treated. They are also pressured to divorce their husbands who are arbitrarily detained or who are serving prison-terms, and to inform on other Islamist women. They are being punished for the activities of their husbands.

Al focuses on some cases of women who have been subjected to human rights violations, including a woman who was reportedly tortured on two occasions, another who has been administratively detained for over two years and a woman who "disappeared" reportedly after having

been arrested by security forces. Al has raised these cases with the Egyptian authorities but has received no substantive response.

By highlighting these cases, Al calls on the Egyptian government to ensure that necessary measures be taken to prevent these violations, which risk developing into a widespread pattern, and draws the government's attention to its obligations under international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ratified by Egypt in 1982 and 1986 respectively.

Egypt also participated in drafting the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in which governments reaffirmed their commitment to international human rights instruments safeguarding the rights of women, including the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Women in Egypt are also subjected to serious human rights abuses, including inequalities before the law, domestic violence, female genital mutilation, harassment by Islamist groups of non-Islamist women and so forth.

For example, Law 26/1975 on Egyptian Nationality bars foreign husbands and children of Egyptian women from acquiring Egyptian nationality. Egyptian women are also required to have their husband's or father's permission to travel abroad. Recently, the Mufti Al Sheikh Nasr Farid Wasseel, the highest religious authority in the country, stated that women should not seek senior government posts because that "would be against nature," adding that "if a woman asked for a high-ranking position in government, she would be acting against nature because such jobs demand firmness while a woman's nature is characterised by clemency and tenderness."

His comments infuriated many women and men alike. Dozens of girls have died in Egypt after or while undergoing genital mutilation. Condemnation by local and international human rights groups led the minister of health in July 1996 to issue a decree banning the practice in all hospitals, clinics and medical centres of the health ministry. An increasing number of women, especially in Upper Egypt have been pressured by Islamist men to wear the hijab (the veil).

Women's groups in Egypt have been campaigning for respect of women's rights and for equality before the law. Several women's human rights groups, focusing mainly on women's issues, have been set up in recent years. For example, Dr. Susan Fayad runs Al Nadim Centre for the Management and Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, founded in Cairo in 1993; it helps women, men and children who are victims of torture, including rape, domestic violence and child harrasing. Dr. Aida Saif Al Dawia heads the New Woman Research Centre, which deals with violence against women, rape and other women's issues. Azza Sulayman, a lawyer and previously working at the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights, has now set up a centre that provides legal aid and general human rights education to women in popular Cairo districts.

Amnesty International

Suffering in Iraq — 'the world is to be blamed'

By Lotte Jorgensen
Special to the Jordan Times

BAGHDAD — The four-wheel drive rolls into the gas station along the desert highway on the Iraqi side of the Iraqi-Jordanian border. The driver has been longing to fill the almost empty tank with cheap Iraqi gasoline, since the border, in order to take us safely during the last half of the way from Amman to Baghdad. But unfortunately, due to yet another power cut, there is no electricity to run the gasoline pump, and nobody knows how long it will last.

Welcome to Iraq, the country which is practically choking on its own oil because the rest of the world has decided not to buy it. That is, as of December last year, Iraq has been granted a six-month period by the United Nations Security Council to sell \$2 billion worth of oil in order to buy food supplies and medicine. Before that, since the 1990 Gulf war, Iraq had been under strict sanctions by the international community.

For almost seven years now, Iraq has hardly sold any oil and all trade between Iraq and the outside world was formally suspended.

The consequences of six years of hardship have left clear marks on the country, even though signs of a once-prosperous oil nation are still evident to the eye of a first-time visitor to Baghdad: tall and proud monuments, exclusive neighbourhoods and fast-running highways. But Baghdad today, most of all, brings to the memory the image of an elderly lady who has a tougher job each day covering up all her wrinkles.

Concrete apartment buildings, once built according to the most modern principles of construction, are now shabby looking and in serious need of repair by skilled craftsmanship. The same goes for the car park: old western cars from the beginning of the eighties still run the streets, held together with wire, smart ideas, and, in some cases, with chewing gum.

However, there are no signs of the war, no ruins of shut down houses. All the

bridges across the Tigris were fast restored after the war, on demand from Saddam Hussein — supposedly as a symbol of the nation's invincibility. Other problems are not quite as easy to solve. Electricity, for example, is an unevenly produced and even more unevenly distributed commodity. The production plants were all severely damaged during the war and, due to the sanctions, the lack of imported spare parts has made it impossible to restore all the facilities, so at the moment only about half of their total capacity is running.

The Iraqis are the ones to endure the consequences on a daily basis. The city of Baghdad has electricity 24 hours a day, with a few exceptions of fall-outs, hot according to reports from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), both in the northern territories, which are controlled by Kurds, and in the southern parts of the country, electricity is only available some 2-3 hours a day.

The streets of Baghdad are lined up with mountains of home-grown vegetables, in all shapes and colours, next to stalls offering big fish from the River Tigris to any pass-byer.

In Thawra, a tough, poor and litter-covered neighbourhood situated on the outskirts of Baghdad, items which are not supposed to be there due to the sanctions are for sale by the truckloads: anything can be purchased. Despite the long-lasting embargo on trade with Iraq, the crisis in Iraq is not one of shortage — it is a matter of price; adding to that the lack of money to buy adequate amounts of food, the image reflected is very critical, especially in remote areas, far away from the capital.

The situation has worsened over the years and international relief organisations, such as the Red Cross/Crescent, have more than once warned the world of the serious consequences such as grave deterioration in the general state of health, especially of children, due to malnourishment.

Lack of drugs and medical supplies has further



Everything for a price: From construction bricks (above) to clothes (below, left) the streets of Baghdad are bustling with people out for a bargain with the aim to make ends meet (file photo)

added to the critical health situation. Just before the oil-for-food deal is supposed to come through, with the first extra supplies of medicine, even general hospitals like the Alwala Hospital in Baghdad have almost nothing to offer their patients.

The shelves in the storage rooms are practically empty, featuring only saline solutions coming from foreign donations and a few other items. Equally empty are the wards because, as Managing Director of the maternity ward Dr. Mohamed Ali Al Tawil explains, "no drugs, such as antibiotics, therefore no operations due to the high risk of infections". Detergents are another item out of stock, and it is altogether becoming a very risky affair to undergo surgery. Therefore, he says, many patients are turned down at the hospitals where only the most severe cases are accepted.

The alternative is either expensive private hospitals, where often the same doctors show up to perform their duties — at a much higher cost. Or, as a last

resource, the black market may come up with the solution in the form of sometimes dubious drugs at prices that could push average-income people to bankruptcy.

To make both ends meet many people hold more than just one job. Those fortunate enough to own a car, no matter its state as long as it runs, try to make money as non-certified taxi-drivers, even though it is illegal. But as long as they do not get caught there is a nice profit in this line of business. Public transportation is scarce and, moreover, Iraqi home-made gasoline is sold at giveaway prices: 1.5 to 1.5 Iraqi dinars a litre, depending on the quality — even for the Iraqis that is cheap.

The less fortunate think of other income-generating ways, ranging from offering small medallions or chewing gum in the streets to taking the opportunity to wipe the windscreen of the cars waiting at traffic lights, hoping for a few coins. Repairs of practically anything has also become an important line of business. For example, a street in Thawra is entirely dedicated to car spare parts. Men of all ages mend tires by hand and what is not on display on the spot can be "found" in a couple of hours.

Others have given up making people pay for something; instead, they ask directly for a handout. According to people who have been to Iraq before 1990, beggars and "unofficial" businesses are newcomers who did not even exist in Baghdad five to 10 years ago.

The Iraqis try their best to cope with the situation, and, according to Swedish Staffan de Mistura, coordinator for the United Nations Humanitarian Operation in Iraq, "it is a

miracle (also due to the creativity of the people) that it has, so far, not gone worse".

Unfortunately, the creativity has a darker side to it as well, crossing, in some cases, boundaries of legal activity and making crimes of hitherto unknown dimensions a reality of the Iraqi society.

A World Health Organisation (WHO) employee tells that since the New Year, 14 pharmacies in Baghdad alone have been robbed in broad daylight. Somewhere else, a woman celebrates with her office colleagues the coming home of her 17-year old son, held up in the street with a couple of friends and forced into a car at gun point a few days before. The boys were kidnapped and taken to a different neighbourhood where they were robbed of everything they had. Only because one boy got away did the kidnappers let the boys go, fearing he might be able to recognise them.

Black market activities had been on the rise, ever since the sanctions were imposed on Iraq. This had given way to a whole new social group of nouveaux riches.

In a quiet neighbourhood, a small fairy tale castle has been under construction for about two years. All the building materials are imported: marble, roof tiles, porcelain bathroom items, everything was shipped from Italy in mysterious ways, despite the sanctions. Price: 700 million Iraqi dinars. According to the guard, who willingly shows us around the mansion, the owner is a Mercedes-dealer and money exchanger on Iraq's free money market. By the swimming pool in the backyard, a professor of the local arts academy is plastering a water-spitting stat-

ue on the wall behind. He also seems to be as busy now as always.

The growing differences, in terms of wealth, among the Iraqis have nourished social unrest and dissatisfaction among the less fortunate. People in general are seriously disturbed by the developments in the Iraqi society. However, the biggest worry is that neither the police forces nor the leaders of the country are trying hard enough to straighten things out. Apparently signs of dissatisfaction with the present state of affairs do occur occasionally. Two months ago, two bombs went off in Baghdad, blowing out the windows of the nearby buildings, one of which is Iraq's Central Medical Testing Laboratory. Workers were replacing the broken windows as we were visiting. And according to reports, the police are still on the look for the terrorists.

Under these circumstances, when common people live hard lives while being flashed the growing richness of the newly affluent and having their leader, Saddam Hussein, continue the construction of his new palace, with no consideration for the needs of his people, the strongest feeling among the Iraqis is that the whole world has joined an alliance against Iraq.

"Our society is falling apart, and it is the sanctions' fault. I am sure, this has all been carefully planned by the CIA," says a man in the street. But why the whole world is doing this to the Iraqi people, he cannot understand. And irrespective of the reasons for internal dissatisfaction, the sanctions bear the main blame for all the misery, in the eyes of the common people. And the world does anything to alleviate their suffering, they say.



IMF to take capital movements under its wing

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The top policy-making body of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has given the go-ahead for broadening its mandate to cover liberalisation of capital movements as well as payments.

The IMF Interim Committee met Monday for "specific recommendations on key elements of an amendment" to the IMF articles of agreement on this point by its next meeting, scheduled for Sept. 21 in Hong Kong.

The committee, grouping finance ministers and central bankers of 24 countries representing the entire IMF membership, said an "open and liberal" system was good for the world economy.

And it said the fund was "uniquely placed to promote the orderly liberalisation" in this domain, recognising that this would require flexible transition arrangements for the countries involved.

"We have the unanimous support" of all the fund's 181 member countries for working towards this objec-

tive, IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus told reporters.

This was "history" in the making, he said, recalling that the fund's original statutes, negotiated at Bretton Woods in 1944, gave it a mandate to oversee external payments — for goods and services — but kept the capital account out of its reach.

Interim Committee chairman Philippe Maystadt of Belgium said the reference to transitional provisions reflected "concern about the pace of liberalisation" in some countries, and Mr. Camdessus said there was no "North-South split" on this point.

The concern for "prudent, progressive liberalisation" was universally admitted.

Monetary officials noted that many countries have already freed up capital movements — including foreign direct investment flows, as well as purchases of equity and bonds.

They said the proposed amendment must be seen in the context of deepening economic globalisation. It would give the fund a man-

date to encourage capital account liberalisation where this has not yet taken place.

And there would be allowance for countries to maintain some form of restrictions during a transitional period, or to reintroduce curbs in the event of emergencies, subject to IMF approval.

The Interim Committee put off efforts to settle two more controversial issues until its next session.

Mr. Maystadt said "we did not succeed in closing the gap" over the size of a proposed "special" one-time allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), the IMF's reserve asset.

On the related issue of a proposed substantial increase in the fund's capital base, they "did not make much progress" but asked IMF executive directors to "complete" their work ahead of the Hong Kong session.

In what appeared as a further warning to Japan to pursue policies to control its trade surplus especially in regard to the United States, it echoed the language used

Sunday in a Group of Seven (G-7) statement.

The final communiqué said exchange rates should "reflect economic fundamentals," and "excess volatility and significant deviations" from fundamental conditions were "undesirable."

"The concern is about the possible evolution of exchange rates in the near future," explained Mr. Camdessus.

The ministerial communiqué took an upbeat view of the world economic outlook but said challenges remained.

"In Japan, prospects for continued recovery appear more favourable," but "rigorous implementation of the authorities deregulation programme as well as appropriate fiscal reforms are important over the medium term to enhance growth," it said.

Continental Europe must tackle labour market rigidities and the United States and Britain were facing the challenge of "sustaining the expansion while preventing an upturn in inflation."

The committee felt "the

recent abatement of overheating pressures in many of the emerging market economies, especially in Asia, will help to sustain their expansions." But some large current account deficits "need to be reduced."

It welcomed improved growth and prospects in Africa, but stressed that meaningful poverty reduction would require faster per capita growth. This implied a "need to accelerate structural reforms and for the increased support of the international community."

It said countries in transition to market economy showed continuing sharp differences in performances which highlight "the benefits of steadfast commitment to stabilisation and structural reforms."

IMF to publish assessment of members' policies — when they want it

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The International Monetary Fund (IMF) may henceforth release information on its economic policy consultations with individual members whenever the countries concerned want the fund's views to be publicised, the IMF has said.

It said the IMF executive board has just given the go-ahead for publication of "press information notices" on a voluntary basis following the conclusion of regular consultations with member countries under article 4 of the fund's statutes.

"We want to be more open about fund surveillance over the economic policies and prospects of member countries," a senior monetary source said, stressing that there was at the same time a concern to "maintain the confidentiality" of the regular, roughly annual, consultations.

The fund said there was a feeling that increased transparency would strengthen the IMF surveillance process, which has traditionally been surrounded by tight secrecy.

When a country wants the fund's viewpoints to be conveyed to the public, the IMF will now issue a release reflecting the conclusions reached by the executive board and containing factual background information about its economy and economic indicators.

The IMF, which has a 2,500-strong staff, currently oversees support programmes with about 80 countries, but no less than 120 of the fund's 181 members are currently benefiting from IMF surveillance and advice.

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 1997
By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Richter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) A superior can give you the advice and support you need today to get a new project under way, so take advantage of the situation. Be sure to drive with the utmost care while you are on the highway to avoid difficulties.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Try to be more practical handling your daily routines today, and you'll make much more rapid progress. Avoid a person who resents your position in business activities and desires to sink your methods of operation.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Study some information which comes from a distance carefully today, as it may assist you to advance very quickly in the days ahead. Later this evening will be good for meeting with a bigwig to discuss your ideas for a new project.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 31) A skilled advisor can help you clear up a financial difficulty this morning, so make the best use of this resource. Have a long discussion with your mate later this evening, so that you can iron out any differences of opinion.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) A good friend can help you get into a new social activity today which will make you much more popular. Take it easy later this evening and get plenty for the days ahead could be hectic with career activities.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Get together with your fellow associates for some recreational activities which everyone will enjoy. This will create a greater harmony in the work place and increase efficiency, which will get noticed by superiors.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) You can enjoy the company today of someone with very different views from you own if you keep an open mind and try to understand them. Later this evening will be good to go out on the town with your loved ones.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You should not let anyone influence your thoughts or actions today, or you could have a great deal of difficulty accomplishing your goals. Later tonight will be good to meet with close friends in recreational activities.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Before beginning a large, new project today, get the advice of an expert who has had many previous successes in this area of business. Later this evening will be good to visit close friends who you have not seen in some time.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) The greater your ingenuity, the greater your chances for success today, so use your imagination. Use care in making an important decision by consulting your loved ones and get their input on what you should do.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is a fantastic day today to establish some fine new relationships, so be charming and courteous to everyone you meet. Later this evening will be good for meeting with knowledgeable people who can give advice on career activities.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Forget traditions today, and be more spontaneous and imaginative in your career activities, thereby you can get noticed by a bigwig. This will make your daily routines more exciting and enjoyable.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

Rubin wants IMF to intensify market reform efforts

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin Monday urged the IMF to make a greater effort to pry open closed markets and said Washington was prepared to reward African countries that initiate economic reform.

Mr. Rubin, addressing a meeting here of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) policymaking Interim Committee, also said the IMF should pay increased attention to monitoring banking systems in emerging market economies.

In industrial countries, he added, reducing high levels of unemployment "requires a more aggressive approach to structural reform as well as supportive macroeconomic policies."

Persistent double-digit joblessness in some mem-

bers of the European Union has frequently been attributed to structural constraints that make it expensive for employers to expand payrolls.

Citing the need to boost growth and reform in the world's poorest nations, Mr. Rubin argued that the IMF needs to become "a more effective engine for market-oriented reform, trade liberalisation and growth."

He said markets that were open to foreign goods and investment enjoyed more efficient resource allocation and increased domestic savings.

In addition the fund should pay "increased attention to surveillance of domestic banking systems, particularly in emerging market economies" in order to avert "costly financial crises."

Camdessus defends conditions attached to debt initiative

WASHINGTON (AFP) — IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus Monday defended a requirement that poor nations undertake certain reforms in order to qualify for debt relief from international creditors.

Imposing a period during which beneficiaries demonstrate their commitment to economic reform and adjustment "is not a catastrophe," he told a press conference following a meeting here of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) policymaking Interim Committee.

He had been asked about the legitimacy of making some countries wait until early in the next century to take advantage of a debt relief scheme offered by the fund, the World Bank, the Paris Club of government creditors and multilateral lenders. The initiative requires beneficiaries to demonstrate "a track record of good perfor-

mance under World Bank-IMF supported programmes," which in many cases means a three-year period between the time a country has been accepted for participation and its actual debt relief.

Countries that until now have not performed to the satisfaction of the fund and the bank would have a six-year waiting period.

"When these countries are under these conditions, they are financed under extremely favourable (terms)," Mr. Camdessus insisted.

"They are helped to improve significantly their macroeconomic balances. They are helped to go to higher goals," he said, adding: "Of course one can dream of a system in which you forgive all the existing debt and you don't ask the country to apply adjustment programmes — but you have to be prepared to go ahead with a new forgiveness of debt in 10 years."

Uganda has just been designated the first beneficiary of the plan, with some \$338 million in the East African nation's debt to multilateral institutions scheduled to be cancelled as of April 1998.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7243	0.6136	1.4676	126.79	1.3975	1709.48	1.9400	5.1160
DE Mark	0.5799	-	0.3556	0.6508	73.52	0.8103	960.95	1.1249	3.3719
GB Sterling	1.6298	2.8095	-	2.3017	206.90	2.2776	2766.11	3.1918	9.4789
CH Franc	0.6814	117.48	0.4177	-	86.39	0.9519	1164.42	132.25	3.9619
JP Yen	0.0079	1.3585	0.4833	1.1566	-	1.1013	13.46	152.89	4.5830
CA Dollar	0.7156	1.2359	0.4391	1.0511	1.10	-	1226.50	1.3904	4.1862
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0087	0.3588	0.0860	1348.80	0.8177	-	11.35	3.4029
NL Guilder	0.5155	88.86	0.3159	75.63	65.31	0.7200	880.01	-	2.9861
FR Franc	0.1710	0.2964	0.1054	25.2321	21.78	0.2403	33.35	33.3500	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7490	0.3770	3.6402	0.3042	3.6710	1539.50	3.3850
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	5.2952	0.5325	5.1415	0.4297	5.1850	2174.44	4.7811
GB Sterling	0.2657	0.1889	-	0.1006	0.97	0.8812	0.98	410.64	9.9029
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8781	9.9448	-	9.66	0.8070	9.74	4063.77	8.5793
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0299	1.0299	-	0.8636	1.01	422.92	0.0299
Kuwait Dinar	3.2869	2.3271	12.3225	1.2391	11.96	-	12.07	5060.15	9.9299
Emirates Dinar	0.2724	0.1929	1.0212	1.0227	0.9919	0.8829	-	419.37	0.9221
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4599	2.4352	0.2449	2.3645	0.1976	2.3845	-	2.1988
Egyptian	0.2954	0.2092	1.1075	0.1114	1.0754	0.0899	1.0845	454.80	-

Energy		Mid-East Currencies	
Brent	18.45 18.30	SA Riyal	0.2667 0.4601 0.16366 0.3916 33.8467
W. Texa	20.10 19.80	AE Dirham	0.2724 0.46984 0.16714 0.39982 34.565
Bony	18.45 18.30	KW Dinar	3.2869 2.01654 4.82625 417.014
Dubai	17.34 16.92	BH Dinar	0.3770 4.57457 1.8278 3.89408 336.597
UL Gas	194.00 194.00	CY Pound	1.9452 3.3541 1.1929 2.8351 246.657

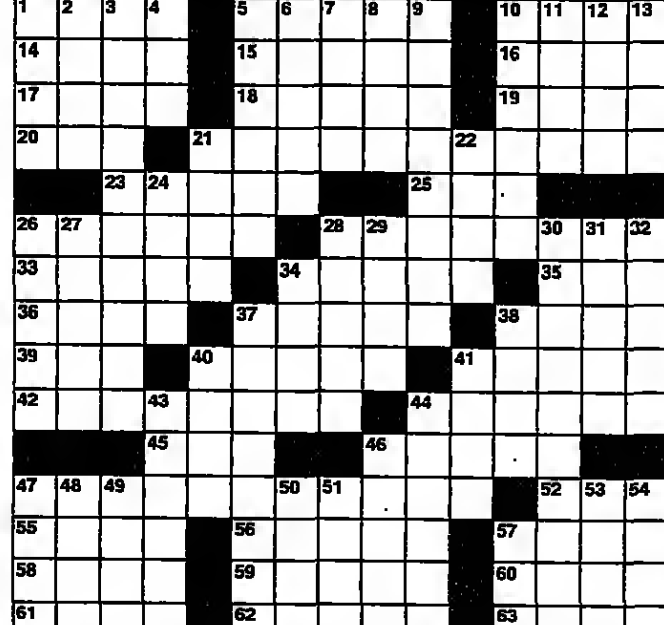
Energy			JOD Cross Rates		
Commodity	Last	Delivery	Currency	Buy	Sell
Coffee (c/lbs)	219.17	Spot	US Dollar	0.708	0.710
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1472	Spot	GB Sterling	1.1488	1.1545
Sugar (\$/ton)	317	Spot	DE Mark	0.4083	0.4103
Wheat (\$/ton)	178	Spot	CH Franc	0.4796	0.482
Soya (c/lbs)	24.11	Spot	FR Franc	0.1211	0.1217
Tea (stg/kg)	144	Spot	JP Yen	0.558	0.5608
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot	NL Guilder	0.3629	0.3647
Rice (\$/ton)	480	Spot	IT Lira	0.4117	0.4138

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- Salmon variety
- Electrical measurement
- Slacks need
- Black, poetically
- Name in violins
- Jai —
- Accumulated knowledge
- Ballots
- Wash
- "— Miserables"
- Prevent from scoring
- Habituate: var.
- Expert
- Some fowl
- Long, long race
- Concerning
- States of mind
- A feast — famine
- Fancy dress
- Nickels, dimes, etc.
- Stuff
- Holiday time
- Stage
- Sew loosely
- Army officer
- Recipients
- Keats subject
- Staggering
- Shrewd bargainer
- Mimic
- Significant time spans
- Assuages
- Took to court
- Nastase of the courts
- Ceremonial procedures
- Fairy tale monster
- Landlord's income
- Viscous
- Part of the leg



by Frank R. Jackson

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- Instances of kindness
- "That's —"
- Deserters
- Fits to —
- Gets rid of
- "Coppelia"
- Israeli airline
- Ethna output
- Row
- Seek out
- Edible tubers
- Name word
- Confinement
- Over
- Slightly wet
- Top-drawer
- Guffaw
- Speechify
- Accuses

Ensour, Anani stress need to introduce temporary laws to activate economy

AMMAN (J.T.) — Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour was quoted as saying at a meeting with Parliament members over the weekend that there was need for the government to introduce temporary laws stressing that the absence of legislation, especially those that tackle economic issues, was bound to harm the national economy.

"We are meeting to exchange views and to consult each other about draft economic laws which could not be finalised by the past sessions of the Lower House of Parliament," said Dr. Ensour at the meeting which was attended by some deputies, including House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Sour as well as Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani, and members of the House's Finance Committee.

"We realise that some deputies are against the government introducing temporary laws but the continued absence of economic laws is hurting the economy," stressed Dr. Ensour.

His view was echoed by Dr. Anani who said that in its final session, Parliament has endorsed the

country's companies law but this law can not be enforced without a law on securities.

He said that Parliament was not able to pass the law on securities due to insufficient time and, as such, the work of many companies remains on hold until the draft law on securities is endorsed.

Dr. Anani added that there is no alternative to the introduction of a temporary law to stimulate the national economy for the time being until a permanent law is worked out by Parliament.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the relationship between the laws on securities and companies.

The committee's rapporteur, Abed Musa Nahar, said after the meeting that the deputies demanded that the government convene an extraordinary session for Parliament in the coming summer to discuss the draft law on securities.

Noting that no agreement has been reached on this issue, Mr. Nahar said that the two deputy prime ministers will convey the deputies' views to the Council of Ministers.

Experts estimate Arab World requires \$30b for telecom projects until year 2000

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states need private investment in their telecommunication sector to ensure multi-billion-dollar expansion projects, industry experts have said.

They stressed regional states should press ahead with economic reforms to create the right climate for investment and to attract technology.

The experts at an international telecommunication conference in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) estimated the Arab League's 22 members required nearly \$30 billion for telecommunication projects until the year 2000, including around \$13.2 billion for telephone network expansions.

"Arab states should increase private sector participation in the telecommunication sectors," said Louis Hobeika, a former World Bank expert.

"But this depends on many factors," he told the conference. "They include the establishment and enhancement of peace in and among all countries and the availability of stable macro-economic environment."

Ministers and other high-ranking officials and businessmen from 28 countries, including Iran and the United States, have participated in the three-day meeting, covering telecommunication requirements in the Middle East until the year 2000 and means of securing financing for such

projects.

Iran has sent its communications minister while more than 20 U.S. officials, including the assistant secretary of commerce, were present. Washington is pushing to grab more telecommunication contracts in the oil-rich region after winning a multi-billion-dollar telephone deal in Saudi Arabia.

The countries of the Middle East should privatise their telecommunication sector," a UAE communications ministry official said.

"This will ensure funds for the upcoming projects as many of them are suffering from cash problems. It will also attract technology in this sector, provides effective

management and ease the financial burden on the state," he added.

Figures provided by Mr. Hobeika showed Saudi Arabia, which has announced plans to sell part of the telephone and other sectors to the public, needs around \$1.65 billion in the next four years for telephone expansions.

Investments were estimated at \$1.73 billion in Morocco, \$1.55 billion in Egypt, \$1.3 billion in Syria, \$1.23 billion in Algeria, \$1.2 billion in the UAE and \$1.16 billion in Tunisia.

The investments do not cover satellite ventures as the UAE alone intends to spend between \$700 million and \$1 billion to launch its own satel-

lite, making it the first Arab country to have such a facility.

Mr. Hobeika, a well-known Arab economic expert, urged region states to develop their stock markets and liberalise their economies to lure such investments.

"There is a need for the development of efficient, transparent and complete capital markets. It means the Middle East countries should develop their equity, bond, and derivatives markets as

well as give financial institutions the freedom to work in a competitive environment," he said.

"They should also create a transparent and robust investment environment. Governments must create a favourable climate and opportunities for internal and external investments and maintain realistic exchange rates. This will help develop private sector activities," Mr. Hobeika concluded.

Speakers shed light on trade, farm issues concerning WTO

By Mohammad Huneiti
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — On the second and last day of a conference entitled: "The Reality of Trade: International Conference on World Trade Organisation (WTO) - Accession" government participant Rami Maaiia submitted a working paper dealing with facilities versus obstacles in the world of trade.

The paper tackled the question of "country of origin" and its relationship to provisions on textile and woven materials in the WTO accord as well as problems caused by customs tariffs.

Mr. Maaiia, representing the Jordan Exports Development and Commercial Centres Corporation (JEDCCO), said any country can place obstacles in the application of the WTO rules by imposing such tariffs. He explained that lack of coordination in the application of rules concerning "country of origin" and "customs tariffs" is bound to create an obstacle adversely affecting trade transactions, investments and profits and, as such, restrict the transfer of industrial technology.

Mr. Maaiia expressed the view that Jordan should join the international effort that seeks a special transparent agreement on the question of "country of origin," that would facilitate trade among the WTO member nations.

He also urged Jordan to acquire modern technology so as to produce high quality textiles and so ensure its competitiveness in a world free market.

Another participant, Walid Abed Rabbo, examined the impact of joining the WTO on the agricultural sector in Jordan and described the WTO membership would offer the Kingdom a good chance to improve the quality of its agricultural output by benefiting from foreign expertise that will be offered.

"Jordan should pursue efforts in agrarian reform in order to strengthen its position during the negotiations for joining the WTO," he indicated. "The reform can be achieved through appropriate utilisation of water resources, the employment of skilled labour in farming and by employing modern technology," explained Dr. Abed Rabbo who is director of Administrative Development Department at the Ministry of Agriculture.

Parallel to these efforts, he said, Jordan has to give greater attention to controlling agricultural pests and diseases, better manage its water resources and increase its research in agriculture-related fields.

However, Dr. Abed Rabbo noted that despite measures to increase food output, Jordan's agricultural import bill was likely to increase with the growth in population.

He said that in 1991, Jordan's imports of food products reached JD417 million, dropping slightly in 1994 but rising to JD419 million in 1995 and then suddenly rising to JD677 million in the first 11 months of 1996. The last figure accounted for 24 per cent of the country's total exports.

The conference was organised by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in conjunction with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to deal with the impact of the WTO on the region as well as the challenges facing developing countries wishing to join the organisation.

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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Dead Sea holding firm sets up new company to produce magnesium

** THE JORDAN Magensia Company is a new company that was established this week with a preliminary capital of JD30 million, Naser Al Saadoun, the deputy general manager of the Arab Potash Company (APC) has announced.

Affiliated to the holding firm Dead Sea Mineral Industries Company, the total investment in the Jordan Magensia Company (JMC) may reach \$90 million in the future, Mr. Al Saadoun said. He revealed that the holding firm had a 51 per cent equity in JMC with the remaining 49 per cent held by APC (20 per cent), the Social Security Corporation (15 per cent), the Jordan Investment Corporation (five per cent), Prince Al Waleed Bin Talal (6.2 per cent), the Arab Bank Ltd. (1.6 per cent) and the Industrial Development Bank (0.8 per cent).

Mr. Al Saadoun told Al Ra'i that JMC is expected to start production in 1999. The capacity will be about 50,100 tonnes annually of magnesium oxide in addition to 10,000 tonnes annually of magnesium derivatives and magnesium hydroxide, he said. According to the deputy general manager, the new company will provide 250 job opportunities and the return expected from the investment in the project will reach about 18 per cent annually.

Noting that the project was presented at the Amman and Cairo economic summits, the senior APC chief said regional and international financial sources were ready to pump between 50 and 60 per cent of the capital in credits at very favourable interest and other terms.

Mr. Al Saadoun said magnesium oxide is essential in manufacturing fire bricks used in kilns for melting steel. He pointed out that studies have certified the feasibility of obtaining a high quality product that can compete on international markets (Al Ra'i).

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ENWIC
TAWLZ
LARFOL
MIRNIF

Print answer here: A

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers Monday)

Yesterday's Jumbles: SWISH WEARY FROLIC MANIAC
Answer: A Frisbee contest can turn into this - A WHIRL WAR

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - BUREAU											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607178											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 29/04/1997											
LAST 12 MONTHS		COMPANY'S NAME	P / S	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
HIGH	LOW										
269.000	213.000	ARAB BANK	11.5	1.59	3	80	20080	251.00	251.00	-	-
1.100	1.140	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	2	0.00	23	12192	21112	1.74	1.73	-	-0.1
3.500	3.100	CALIP ARABIAN BANK	9.3	3.33	6	3250	14514	4.90	4.50	-	-0.4
3.500	2.760	BANK OF JORDAN	10.5	0.00	1	350	1015	2.90	2.90	-	-0.1
9.100	4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	12.9	2.86	4	5650	27470	4.86	4.83	-	-0.3
2.950	2.440	JOR. KUWAIT BANK	19.1	0.00	1	100	263	2.65	2.63	-	-0.2
1.090	.800	JOR. GULF BANK	4.8	8.44	1	1000	810	.80	.81	-	.01
4.110	3.480	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	17.4	0.00	7	3800	13756	3.80	3.62	-	-0.18
3.800	3.000	JOR. INV. FID. BANK	17.6	0.00	1	200	650	3.15	3.25	-	.10
3.850	1.040	BEIT AL-MAL (BETHNA)	.7	14.02	5	1450	1561	1.13	1.07	-	-0.06
1.440	1.000	PELLELAD. INV. BK.	9	0.00	12	3947	4525	1.13	1.14	-	.01
BANK SECTOR TOTALS											
INDEX: 190.32			CHNG: -0.19		54	32019	105856				
1.820	1.450	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	11.7	7.10	50	79967	135492	1.69	1.69	-	-
1.560	1.280	IRBID ELECTRICITY	8.2	8.33	1	50	69	1.38	1.38	-	-
2.800	2.090	SHIPPING LINES	10.1	8.33	3	10700	25680	2.40	2.40	-	-
1.520	.930	RAIL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	2	750	728	.97	.97	-	-
1.030	.830	REAL ESTATE INV.	12.2	6.82	1	250	320	.89	.88	-	-0.01
.920	.480	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	25.2	0.00	1	100	49	.48	.49	-	.01
2.200	1.200	HID. EAST HOTELS	17.8	0.00	3	1000	1175	1.20	1.17	-	-0.03
1.220	.950	ZARQA EDUCATION	8.5	6.67	3	825	825	.97	.97	-	-
2.230	1.650	UNIFIED CO.	7.8	6.67	1	250	413	1.65	1.65	-	-0.01
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS											
INDEX: 103.22			CHNG: -0.16		66	93927	164679				
3.800	3.060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.9	2.74	16	3110	11320	3.65	3.65	-	-0.15
3.500	2.710	JOR. FERTILIZERS	11.8	0.00	2	1110	3386	3.20	3.05	-	-0.15
10.400	8.720	JOR. PETROL. REFINARY	10.3	7.85	26	3840	39073	10.19	10.19	-	-
7.300	6.250	JORDAN TANNING	7.2	5.37	2	600	4020	6.68	6.70	-	.02
3.360	1.650	INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX	24.7	0.00	4	1000	1843	.46	.46	-	-0.02
4.100	3.040	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	10.1	5.45	7	1085	3959	3.66	3.67	-	.01
7.250	5.650	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	8.8	3.52	1	300	2130	7.15	7.10	-	-0.05
1.760	1.180	NATIONAL TILES	8.3	0.00	5	1500	1790	1.36	1.36	-	-
5.400	3.130	ARAB ALUM. IND.	8.4	8.83	5	1250	4249	3.40	3.40	-	-
.960	.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	11.0	0.00	38	34550	17498	.50	.52	-	.02
1.040	.840	ARAB PAPER CONV. TRD.	10.6	6.64	3	750	1200	1.04	1.04	-	-
1.310	.850	WALIDA. STONE	8.3	10.71	2	2200	1220	.55	.56	-	.01
1.540	.730	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	6	765	646	.73	.73	-	-
3.720	2.130	RAIL. CABLE WIRE. HFAC	16.3	0.00	2	550	1476	2.78	2.67	-	-0.11
1.170	.970	JOR. SULPHUR CHEM.	9	0.00	21	9350	6311	.66	.68	-	.02
1.670	1.120	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	26.8	0.00	16	6950	9801	1.42	1.43	-	.01
2.660	1.420	UNIV. HOUS. IND.	4.3	14.08	6	1500	2120	1.46	1.42	-	-0.04
1.780	1.140	JOR. INDUS. RESOURCES	15.5	8.70	14	5300	6100	1.46	1.45	-	-0.01
1.230	.840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	15.9	0.00	8	1800	1566	.87	.87	-	-
2.360	1.750	HEL. - SANY READY WEAR	17	0.00	1	1500	2645	1.77	1.79	-	.02
1.360	1.020	INTL. TOBACCO	27.8	0.00	11	7050	8333	1.18	1.18	-	-
1.440	.890	UNION CH. & VEG.	38.5	0.00	6	2820	2537	.89	.90	-	.01
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS											
INDEX: 119.70			CHNG: -0.66		193	88781	132769				
GRAND TOTAL											
INDEX: 150.46			CHNG: -0.37		323	214737	403304				
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 29/04/1997											
.670	.370	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	9	0.00	1	1100	451	.41	.41	-	-
.790	.440	JOR. TRADE FAC.	12.0	0.00	3	5350	2408	.45	.45	-	-
.840	.570	UNION INV. 501	65.1	0.00	9	18020	3243	.69	.68	-	-0.01
.840	.370	ARAB FID. INVEST.	9	0.00	13	114550	52800	.46	.46	-	-
.950	.740	AL-SABAH INV. 751	8	0.00	10	12368	6095	.78	.74	-	-0.04
.840	.200	JOR. INDUS. HARVEST-JERCO	9	0.00	1	250	63	.36	.35	-	-0.01
.740	.510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	14	8827	5071	.57	.58	-	.01
.690	.430	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	9	0.00	7	5450	2438	.44	.45	-	.01
.730	.490	RAIL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	2	2750	1425	.50	.50	-	-
.840	.400	RAIL. MULT. ENG. NAMICO	9	0.00	5	10289	8463	.86	.86	-	-0.03
.880	.720	UNION TOBACCO 751	8	0.00	10	5850	4212	.72	.72	-	-
.650	.430	ARAB ELECT. IND.	8	0.00	3	3750	1913	.51	.51	-	-
.730	.600	HIDEAST PHARM. 751	8	0.00	12	14403	5074	.62	.60	-	-0.02
1.310	.860	UNION TOBACCO 751	8	0.00	3	3250	1993	.66	.67	-	.01
.770	.590	RAIL. PHARM. 651	8	0.00	9	47400	11780	.60	.60	-	-
.640	.390	INDS. ENG.	25.9	0.00	9	250	399	.42	.42	-	-
.960	.760	INDS. CERAMIC	8	0.00	1	900	156	.78	.78	-	-
.990	.350	1. TEXTILE MARRY.	8	0.00	1	1000	390	.41	.39	-	-0.02
.760	.560	PELAL. SAN. P. CONV.	8	0.00	3	850	476	.56	.56	-	-
.820	.590	NATL. POULTRY	8	0.00	7	4600	3353	.69	.70	-	.01
.670	.530	NATL. EAST COMPLEX	8.2	0.00	1	200	140	.74	.70	-	-0.04
GRAND TOTAL											
INDEX: 118			261207		110119						

1st Division Basketball Championship

Orthodoxi, Ahli meet tonight

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Ahli take on Al Orthodoxi Wednesday in a decisive match concluding the first round of the First Division Basketball Championship.

For the first time in years both teams are not topping the overall standings but merely hoping to win to continue their battle for the prestigious title.

With their all-time rivalry now threatened by current league leaders Al Jazireh who beat both top teams, Al Ahli and Al Orthodoxi need the win in tonight's match to stay in contention.

The fight for the title has become a three way race that now seems to be tilting in Al Jazireh's favour who currently top the standings after their 62-54 win over titleholders Al Orthodoxi. Al Jazireh last week also beat Al Ahli 85-57.

While Al Orthodoxi hope to win the title for the third consecutive year after

ending Al Ahli's short-lived reign two seasons ago, the players' form has been inconsistent but still seems better than Al Ahli who have been trying to regroup and upgrade their faltering form.

New Armenian coach Raffi Cholukyan was handed the reins following the team's humiliating defeat to Al Jazireh.

Cholukyan, a former head coach of the Soviet Unions' national teams, takes over from Ghaith Najjar, Al Ahli's coach for the past two seasons, during which the team was unable to reclaim the title

and have been in a slumping form ever since.

Al Ahli were previously trained by Ukrainian Alexander Sacha who guided them to a 1990 win ending Al Orthodoxi's 1976-1989 reign atop the Kingdom's basketball scene.

Al Ahli went on to win the crown in 1992, 93, 94 before Sacha left his post after apparent differences with the board.

Many top players like Naser Bushnaq, Yousef Zaghloul and Marwan Ma'touq have also since left the team.

After coming close to the title in the past two seasons, Al Jazireh have gone a step further this season and seem to be no longer settling for finishing behind all-time rivals Al Ahli and Al Orthodoxi who have dominated the scene for as long as fans can remember.

Al Jazireh seem to have undoubtedly benefited from their participation in the Arab Clubs tournament in Tunisia last month and await Wednesday night's winner whom they will have to beat in the second round to win the title for the first time in decades.

Standings

Team	P	W	L	SF	SA	Pts
Jazireh	4	4	-	344	170	8
Orthodoxi	3	2	1	234	182	5
Ahli	3	2	1	197	184	5
Jalil	4	1	3	222	306	5
Hussein	4	-	4	175	330	4
Yarmouk	-	-	-	-	-	-

•Relegated to 2nd Division

Sampras atop standings as Chang moves to No. 2

MONACO (R) — leading rankings issued by the ATP Tour

1. Pete Sampras (U.S.)	5,118 Points
2. Michael Chang (U.S.)	3,716
3. Thomas Muster (Austria)	3,309
4. Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Russia)	3,147
5. Richard Krajicek (Netherlands)	2,885
6. Goran Ivanisevic (Croatia)	2,710
7. Carlos Moya (Spain)	2,343
8. Marcelo Rios (Chile)	2,240
9. Thomas Enqvist (Sweden)	2,176
10. Wayne Ferreira (South Africa)	1,935
11. Albert Costa (Spain)	1,855
12. Boris Becker (Germany)	1,851
13. Alex Corretja (Spain)	1,792
14. Todd Martin (U.S.)	1,673
15. Felix Mantilla (Spain)	1,640
16. Tim Henman (Britain)	1,546
17. Alberto Berasategui (Spain)	1,532
18. Stefan Edberg (Sweden)	1,510
19. Sergi Bruguera (Spain)	1,458
20. Marc Rosset (Switzerland)	1,444



Pete Sampras



Michael Chang



Atlanta Braves' Mark Lemke comes up short on a tag on Los Angeles Dodgers' Brett Butler as Butler slides in safe after hitting a double in third inning action at Turner Field (Reuters photo)

Yankees rally to beat Mariners 6-5

NEW YORK (R) — Joe Girardi led off the bottom of the eighth inning with a home run, and the Yankees rallied from two runs down for their third straight victory, beating the Seattle Mariners 6-5 on Monday.

Girardi, who had just two homers in 422 at-bats last season, lined a 3-2 pitch from reliever Bobby Ayala over the centre-field fence for his first homer of the season to break a 5-5 tie.

Tim Lincecum had two hits and two RBI for the Yankees, who have won eight of their last 10 games. The much-maligned New York Bullpen retired the last 13 batters.

Former Mariner Jeff Nelson (1-3) worked a perfect eighth, and Mariano Rivera retired pinch-hitter Jose Cora. Alex Rodriguez and Ken Griffey Jr. in the ninth for his seventh save.

Edgar Martinez hit a two-run homer of Kenny Rogers in the third inning for Seattle.

In Milwaukee, Eddy Diaz's two-run double capped a five-run first as the Milwaukee Brewers scored 13 runs in the

first three innings and ripped the Texas Rangers 14-8, snapping their five-game winning streak.

Marc Newfield had four RBI while Diaz and Dave Nilsson drove in three runs apiece for Milwaukee.

"I got a little too close for comfort in the latter part of the ballgame," Milwaukee manager Phil Garner said. "We just couldn't get the ball over the plate. When they did, they were coming from behind (in the count) with fastballs."

Ben McDonald (3-2) laboured to the victory, allowing seven runs and nine hits in 5-2/3 innings. He was chased in a five-run sixth as Texas closed within 13-7.

Angel Miranda, Jose Mercedes and Sean Maloney allowed one run over the final 3-2/3 innings.

Darren Oliver (1-2) failed to make it out of the first, allowing five runs — four earned — and four hits in 2/3 innings with two walks.

Ivan Rodriguez went 2-for-5, extending his hitting streak to 14 games, the best in the American league this season.

Glavine gets 14-runs and shuts out Dodgers

ATLANTA (R) — Tom Glavine pitched seven strong innings and Jeff Blauser and Javier Lopez hit two-run homers as the Atlanta Braves routed the Los Angeles Dodgers, 14-0 on Monday.

Glavine (4-0) allowed just three hits and struck out seven and walked one.

"I'll take 14 runs anytime," Glavine said. "The results have been good. My first two or three starts, I hadn't been real comfortable."

The Braves put the game away with four runs in the fourth inning off starter Ramon Martinez (2-2).

Blauser, who was 3-for-3, hit his third homer of the year with one out in the fifth after Lopez led off the inning with a double.

The Braves scored four runs in the eighth, highlighted by pinch-hitter Keith Lockhart's bases-loaded double.

In Chicago, Terry Mulholland and Mel Rojas combined on an eight-hitter and Tyler Houston drove in three runs, leading the Chicago Cubs to their third win in four games, a 5-2 victory over the Montreal Expos.

Mulholland allowed two runs and six hits over eight innings.

"I think the reason I'm

successful against Montreal is they're an aggressive hitting team and I'm a guy that likes to throw strikes early in the count," Mulholland said.

Rojas got his second straight save and second of the season, despite giving up two hits in the ninth.

"It would be foolish for anyone to count us out as a team in this division," Mulholland said.

In Cincinnati, Rick Reed pitched eight strong innings and was one of 10 Mets with at least one RBI as New York crushed the reeling Cincinnati Reds, 15-2.

Bernard Gilkey had three hits and two RBI and Todd Hundley and Butch Huskey both homered and drove in two runs for the Mets.

Reed, a former replacement player who made the team in spring training, came within three outs of his second straight complete game. He limited Cincinnati to one unearned run and five hits with a walk and two strikeouts, lowering his era to a league-leading 1.03.

"I was pretty nervous before the game, more than usual," said Reed, a West Virginia native who was pitching before 23 friends and family.

"I went out and did my best."

At Florida, Gary Sheffield hit a first-inning Grand Slam and Moises Alou added a Grand Slam in the sixth and finished with five RBI as the Florida Marlins outslugged the San Diego Padres 12-9 for their fourth straight victory.

The Padres led 7-4 heading into the bottom of the sixth, but the Marlins struck for six runs, including Sheffield's fourth career Grand Slam off Tim Scott (1-1), and an RBI single by Alou.

Felix Heredia allowed one run and two hits in two innings for his first Major League victory.

Bobby Bonilla went 4-for-4 with three runs scored.

In Philadelphia, Kevin Elster snapped a tie with an RBI single and Joe Randa added a two-run double in a six-run 12th inning, leading the Pittsburgh Pirates to a 9-4 victory over the Philadelphia Phillies.

"He fell behind 3-0 and he threw something that seemed to be down and away," Elster said. "It was a fast ball or a little cutter. I knew he had to throw a strike."

Darren Daulton had four hits for the Phillies, who committed four errors.

In St. Louis, Ron Gant had three hits and drove in two runs and Andy Benes went

five innings in his first start of the season, helping the St. Louis Cardinals to a 5-2 victory over the San Francisco Giants.

Gant opened the scoring with an RBI single in the first against starter William Vahlandingham (1-2).

Gant's run-scoring double in the sixth extended the Cardinals' lead to 5-2.

"I don't think about the hits or the RBIs. I think about the production to help the team win," Gant said. "I think moving to the number two hole has been a blessing."

In Houston, Vinny Castilla hit a two-out homer in the top of the 10th inning as the Colorado Rockies defeated the Houston Astros, 7-6.

"He's a power pitcher and his best pitch is definitely the fast ball," Castilla said.

"The first one he threw right by me, but I was ready for the second pitch. I made the same swing and caught it."

"Sometimes guys get a macho feeling," Colorado manager Don Baylor said. "He probably got caught up in striking out the side."

Rain washes out opening day of Atlanta tournament

Chang leads pack of top players including Agassi, Courier

ATLANTA (R) — Torrential rains interrupted the opening match of the ATT Challenge tennis tournament and then washed it away Monday.

Alejandro Hernandez of Mexico was leading Petr Korda of the Czech Republic 5-4 in the first set before rains postponed further play until Tuesday.

Korda, the fifth seed, and Hernandez, a wild-card opponent, were the only players to take a sodden centre court on Monday evening. The start of their match delayed by over two hours of rain.

The top four seeds were to play first-round matches on Tuesday.

Michael Chang, ranked second in the world, leads the 32-player field, followed by second-seeded Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden, third-seeded Jim Courier and fourth-seeded Andre Agassi.

Agassi is playing in his first tournament since his high-profile wedding to actress Brooke Shields.



Andre Agassi

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Glenn Close ... in

101 DALMATIANS

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:699238

PLAZA

Eddie Murphy
ME

STRIPTEASE

Show: 5:00 p.m.

CINEMA TEL:677420

CONCORD

CONCORD "1"
Keanu Reeves...in

CHAIN REACTION

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CONCORD "2"

Michael Jordan...in

SPACEJAM

Shows: 3:30, 6:00

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World Cup qualifiers Romania seek 6th straight win

BUCHAREST (R) — Romania look to keep another clean sheet and chalk up their sixth straight victory in World Cup qualifying matches when they meet Ireland in Bucharest in Wednesday.

The Romanians have taken a maximum 15 points from their games so far and boast a goal tally of 19-0.

Victory on Wednesday would take them eight points clear of second-placed Macedonia with four matches left.

But despite their dominance in Group 8, coach Anghel Iordanescu said he would settle for a draw.

"Romania want to win the game against Ireland but a draw would also be good for our progress towards the World Cup finals," he said.

"Despite our previous results the game will be considerably difficult because for Ireland this is one of their last chances to qualify."

Romania will be without midfielders Costel Galca and Ionut Lupescu.

Galca is suspended while Borussia Moenchengladbach's Lupescu has declined to play because he was left on the bench for the 1-0 victory over Lithuania last month.

Barcelona midfielder Gheorghe Popescu is rapidly recovering from a foot injury and doctors said he would probably be able to play.

"We'll decide if Popescu starts or not on Wednesday morning," Iordanescu said. "We'll be happy to have him even for a half."

Ireland lost 3-2 in Macedonia last month and desperately need points in Bucharest.

"A draw would be a good result for us and it could preserve Ireland's bid for the second place of the group eight final standings," Irish trainer Mick McCarthy said.

McCarthy had to draft 17-year-old Richard Dunne into the squad after failing to track down Liverpool defender Phil Babb.

Babb was called up on Friday but the Irish management team could not contact him to let him know in time for him to join the party before they left Dublin.

"If you know where Babb is, please let me know," McCarthy told reporters minutes after arriving in Bucharest.

Babb's Liverpool team mate Jason McAteer is suspended and Alan McLoughlin of Portsmouth is out injured.

Capello confirms he is quitting Real Madrid

MADRID (R) — Real Madrid coach Fabio Capello said on Tuesday he was quitting the club and will leave at the end of this season. Capello, who joined Real at the start of this season from AC Milan, said in an interview with radio Cope in Spain he was leaving because of difficulties with club President Lorenzo Sanz. "For a week I have had big doubts whether to stay with Real Madrid or not and I let the president know."

"I took the decision to leave only two days ago after a dialogue with the club's managers proved impossible," he added.

"One can't work in a squad where one day you talk to the managers and the next it's all in the papers...When people don't behave properly one can't work," Capello said.

He denied recent speculation in the Italian media that he had already signed with AC Milan.

"It is a lie to say I have already signed for someone else," he told the radio station.

Real Madrid are currently top of the Spanish league, eight points clear of second-placed Barcelona.

Knicks, Jazz sweep 1st-round playoffs

NEW YORK (R) — Reserves buck Williams and John Starks combined for all nine points in a fourth-quarter run as the New York Knicks beat the Charlotte Hornets, 104-95, completing a three-game sweep of their Eastern Conference first-round series on Monday.

Former Hornet Larry Johnson scored 22 points and Allan Houston added 20 to lead seven players in double figures for New York. The Knicks, the third seed in the East, will play the winner of the Miami-Orlando series in the conference semifinals. Miami leads that series, 2-0.

"I'm looking forward to the next matchup," said Knicks centre Patrick Ewing, perhaps looking ahead to a showdown with former coach Pat Riley and Miami. "I'm going to enjoy this one."

Glen Rice scored 22 points and Muggsy Bogues added 19 for Charlotte, which tied the game early in the fourth quarter but never led in the second half.

Anthony Mason added 14 points and 11 rebounds for the Hornets, who made their second first-round exit in three playoff appearances.

"(Neither) I or my teammates did not expect to be swept in the first round of the playoffs," said Mason, who was traded for Johnson in the off-season. "Not by the Knicks, not by anyone."

Starks and Ewing had 16 points a piece for the Knicks, who again blistered Charlotte's defence.

"I told the guys that this was not an end, but a beginning," said Charlotte coach Dave Cowens. "We gave up 25 layups. You can't win games like that."

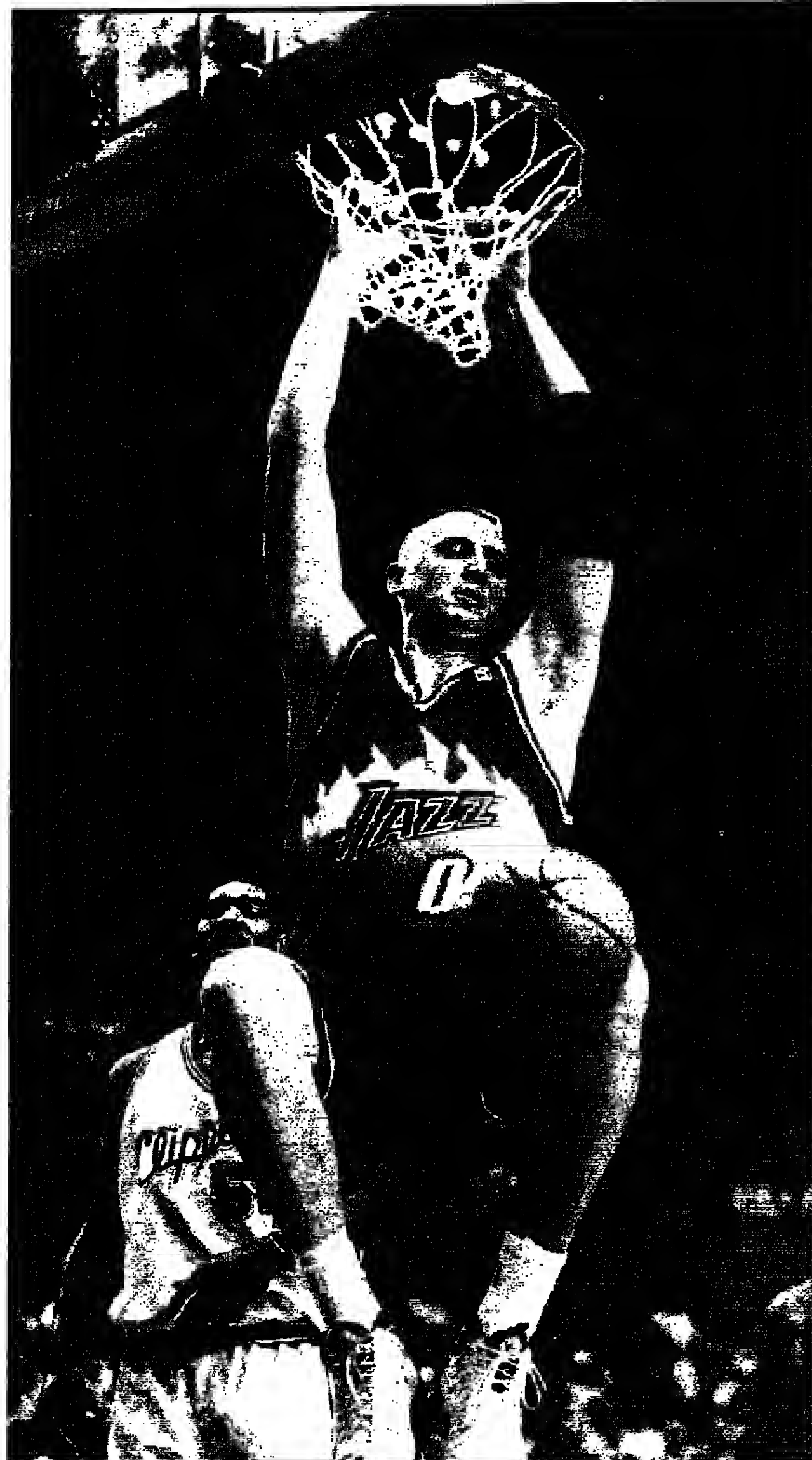
At Utah, Karl Malone scored seven of his 26 points in a run that closed the first half and the Utah Jazz swept the Los Angeles Clippers 104-92 in their Western Conference first-round series.

Jeff Hornacek had 28 points to lead the Jazz, the top seed in the West. Utah will play the winner of series between Portland and the Los Angeles Lakers in the conference semifinals. The Lakers lead that best-of-five series 2-0.

"I don't think anybody's intimidated by us," said Utah coach Jerry Sloan. "The Clippers played us as hard as they could. They made some shots, I don't think anyone is intimidated by us. I don't know how good our team is."

Loy Vaught, who missed the entire second quarter with foul trouble, scored 20 points and Brent Barry added 17 for the Clippers.

"They swept it," said Los Angeles Clippers coach Bill Fitch. "Give them all the credit. We played as hard as we could and as well as we could most of the time."



Utah Jazz Greg Ostertag dunks as Los Angeles Clippers' Lorenzen Wright watches in the first period of game three of their NBA playoff game in Los Angeles (Reuters photo)

NBA PLAYOFF RESULTS

New York	104	Eastern Conference	Charlotte	95
(New York won best-of-five series 3-0)				
Utah	104	Western Conference	LA Clippers	92
(Utah won best-of-five series 3-0)				

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Waldner win not enough against China in Table Tennis Championships

MANCHESTER, England (R) — Jan-Ove Waldner out-hit world champion Kong Linghui in a match of dazzling rallies but it was still not enough to save Sweden from a quarter-final defeat against tide-holders China in the World Table Tennis Championships on Monday.

China's 3-1 victory earned them a semifinal date against South Korea, who scrambled a 3-2 win over Japan.

The other semifinal will be between Germany, 3-1 winners against Greece, and France, who edged Belgium 3-2.

It was a rare meeting for China and Sweden at such an early stage in the championships after having contested the last seven finals.

But after Sweden managed only second place behind Belgium in their group they were forced into a play-off for the quarter-final berth, which they duly gained by beating England 3-1 in the morning session.

China were given a winning start when Olympic gold medalist Liu Guoliang secured a straight games victory over Swedish no.3 Peter Karlsson, although he was taken to deuce in the second.

This brought the world's two top ranking players face to face across the table. Waldner, a member of the Swedish team which won the title three times in succession through 1989 to 1993, showed he likes nothing better than a challenge. Taking the battle to Kong from the start with his fierce topspin, Waldner won 21-15 27-25.

Kong raised the tempo in the second game and the World No.1 and World No.2 matched each other stroke for stroke, attacking and counter hitting with stunning speed. Kong had five game points only to be denied by the 31-year-old Swede.

Waldner himself failed to convert two match points before he was given a third chance with a lucky netcord.

But it was to be Sweden's only success as Jorgen Persson was dismissed by Wang Tao.

It was the first time the Swedish men have missed out on a team medal since 1981.

South Korea and Japan

the decider. It looked fairly routine when South Korea won the opening two matches, but Japan fought back to level the contest.

But Yoo proved equal to the task, hitting through Hiroshi Shibutani's slice defence to earn his team a semifinal appointment with the Chinese.

Germany were too strong for Greece although Steffan Fetzner lost the opening match against Kalinikos Kreanga.

Thee France-Belgium match was another tightly fought affair with Belgian Philippe Saive missing out when leading 20-19 in the decider as Patrick Chila snatched glory for France by winning 10-21 21-19 22-20.

China's women's team showed their continued dominance when they reached the final for the 14th consecutive time with a 3-0 victory over European

champions Germany.

The all-conquering Chinese, 10 times champions since 1975, will dispute the crown with North Korea, who blanked 1995 runners-up South Korea 3-0 in a surprisingly low-key encounter.

Flag-waving Chinese fans spurred on the title-holders throughout the two-hour clash after the previous semifinal between the two Koreas was played out in comparative calm.

South Korean supporters, so conspicuous during Saturday's quarter-final against Japan, kept their flags under wraps. "We are all Koreans and we wanted to show unity," said one of the fans, explaining the absence of Banners.

China were never under serious threat by the Germans, who however had the consolation of winning their first team medal since 1939.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMARA KIRSCH
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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AAJS CK743 OAJ10 AQ35

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1♣ DBA 1♣ Pass
2♣ Pass
What do you bid now?

A. - You asked North to give you the option of doubling the opponents at a low level, but partner refused. That would suggest that North's hand is distributional and not suitable for defense, so you should rule out slam possibilities. Three no trump seems the obvious bid, so why not make it?

Q. 2 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AQJ8764 QAKS QK5 AAS

Your right-hand opponent opens the bidding with one spade. What action do you take?

A. - It is simply a matter of whether to pass or bid one no trump. You might not have a source of tricks at one no trump, and partner will not be happy with your hand in the event North elects to correct to two of a minor. Therefore, we suggest you pass.

Q. 3 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AQJ2 QAJ52 QJ5 AKQJ9

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1♣ Pass 1♣ Pass
What do you bid now?

A. - The one bid to avoid is two no trump - that shows 11-12 points

Q. 4 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AK74CKQJ975432 010 AVOID

The bidding has proceeded:
EAST SOUTH WEST NORTH
1♣ 4♣ 4♣ Pass
What action do you take?

A. - You elected to make a pre-emptive jump to four hearts, and one of the basic principles of pre-emptive bidding is that you don't bid the same value twice. Therefore, pass. Partner knows that at this vulnerability you have excellent playing strength to jump to game, yet has chosen to defend. Respect that decision.

Q. 5 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

A1072 CKJ984 0765 A78

The bidding has proceeded:
WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH
1♣ DBA 2♣ 2♣ ?

A. - You do not have much in the way of high cards, but experience has shown that it is a losing tactic to suppress a fair five-card major in a competitive auction where partner has made a takeout double. Our vote goes to two hearts, rather than pass.

Q. 6 - East-West vulnerable, as South you hold:

A78 QJ988 QJ54 A78

The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1NT DBA 1NT ?

A. - When there is no doubt as to

Unstoppable Blair races towards possible landslide

LONDON (Agencies) — British Labour leader Tony Blair on Tuesday raced toward what looked like a decisive election victory — some said landslide — over Prime Minister John Major, his historic lead now manifestly irreversible.

Three days before Britain's May 1 election, the latest opinion poll published on Monday gave the Labour Party a 19-point lead over the Conservatives.

The Gallup poll for the Daily Telegraph put Labour at 49 per cent, the Conservatives at 30 per cent and the minority Liberal Democrats at 14 per cent.

It showed a 13.3 per cent swing since the 1992 election with a projected Labour majority of 197 in a 659-seat parliament.

The latest survey, was consistent with several polls in the Sunday newspaper which showed Labour's leading in a range from 15-24 points.

The poll was based on interviews with 1,028 electors interviewed by telephone on April 25-27.

Over and over, Mr. Blair preached his well-worn mantra of caution, pushing his troops to fight on to election day Thursday, warning against complacency over his 19-point lead in the polls.

But it rang empty. Labour has already booked a huge hall on the banks of the River Thames for a sunrise victory bash on Friday.

At no time in British history has a government trailed so far behind in the polls as the Conservatives do now, right on the cusp of election day, and managed to cling to power. The page-one banner headline in Tuesday's Independent newspaper spoke volumes: "The Tory party gives up... but no one's told John Major."

Mr. Major was wrong-footed from the start Tuesday when a fresh spate of coded IRA bomb scares shut down airports and highways in southeastern England and forced him to once again condemn the month-long campaign of disruption.

Meanwhile, Mr. Blair and his top lieutenants were pounding the campaign trail, hammering the day's treatise of trust in government. "The truth," said Mr. Blair, "is the Conservatives do not deserve to govern again because

in the last five years they have broken faith with the British people time after time."

"If I had been elected on the last Conservative manifesto, I would not have the gall to ask the British people for their trust again," he declared.

Shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown dubbed the day "Trust Tuesday," drawing a parallel with a pledge not to raise taxes that Mr. Major made on the Tuesday before the 1992 election, followed by 22 tax increases in five years.

Better education with no new income taxes, said Mr. Blair, remained Labour's number one priority. He returned to pledges to rebuild the crumbling National Health Service, safeguard the environment, clean up politics, get tough on crime, put 250,000 unemployed youth to work using a windfall profits tax on utilities privatized by the Tories.

"This is my contract with the British people — my bond of trust with them," declared Mr. Blair. "I ask them to judge me on it, hold me to it. The buck will stop with me. What I promise I will deliver."

Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine, Mr. Major's top campaign lieutenant, warned voters they were "sleepwalking into a nightmare" less than 48 hours from election day.

Mr. Major told a business breakfast in London he was placing his trust in a "mature judgement" of the British people to stick with the Conservatives. "I believe over the last 18 years — wars and all, and all governments make mistakes — that we have changed immeasurably for the better the condition of this country and the opportunities of the people," he said. Mr. Major compared Mr. Blair's "new Labour" to "a great marketing scam."

"There's been nothing like it since the South Sea bubble" — a reference to the speculation mania that ruined many English investors in 1720 after they rushed to buy into the slave-trading South Sea Company, which promptly collapsed. "I think you know what happened to the South Sea bubble. I look forward to that happening to new Labour on Thursday," he said.

Tony Blair's wife tries not to be like Hillary

LONDON (AFP) — Cherie Blair, the wife of the man tipped to become British premier after Thursday's election, has tried hard to avoid the reputation that dogs her potential U.S. counterpart Hillary Clinton, seen by many Americans as the real power behind the throne.

The parallels have always been obvious. Both women are high-flying lawyers, both are politically astute, and both are just as gifted as their husbands. Cherie Blair, who uses her maiden name in her professional life, began with just as much political ambition as her husband Tony.

But when she failed in her 1983 bid to be elected as a Labour member of parliament, she is said to have made a pact with her husband that she would stand aside and let him be the one to pursue a career in politics.

Since then the 42-year-old mother of three young children has largely kept her political opinions to herself. She was rarely far from Tony's side during the six weeks of the election campaign. She pressed the flesh and smiled profusely, but made not one comment that could be considered even remotely political.

And most observers agree that she is likely to stick to this ostensibly non-political stance if she and her spouse move into 10 Downing Street. So what role will she play?

The Guardian newspaper lamented recently that Cherie "will find it very hard to become the independent-minded, successful female role model in number 10 she could have been."

The left-leaning daily echoed the sentiments of many observers when it said the Labour Party had not known what to do with her and had ended up downgrading her into "some middle-brow housewife."

It compared the role she has chosen — or which has been forced upon her — to that played by the homely, housewife-like Norma Major, whose husband John looks likely to be ousted from his post of premier.

If, as expected, Cherie does keep up her job she will become the first full-time working wife at 10 Downing Street. And with a salary of more than 200,000 pounds (\$320,000), she will also be the family's top earner.



ARAB JEWS IN YEMEN: Jewish children play outside their home in Quza, 70 kilometre east of the Yemeni capital Sanaa on Monday. Most of Yemen's Jewish community left their mountain homes to Israel in 1948, but a few dozen remain in Yemen. Elderly Rabbi Yaish says his ultra-orthodox community has refused many offers to move to Israel or the United States. Young boys speak Arabic but study the Torah at home in Hebrew (Reuters photo)

Europe's ministers meet on Iran, Turkey

LUXEMBOURG (R) — European Union (EU) foreign ministers looked set on Tuesday to send ambassadors from their 15 nations back to Iran, almost three weeks after withdrawing them in protest at alleged state involvement in murder.

The ministers were to discuss relations with Iran at a meeting in Luxembourg where they would also hold talks on Turkey and on progress in drafting a new EU treaty.

Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jacques Poos told reporters as he entered the meeting that he expected the meeting to decide to send back the ambassadors to Tehran.

They were withdrawn on April 10 following a finding by a German court that Iran's government had been involved in the Berlin restaurant murder of Kurdish Iranian opposition leaders.

Diplomats said the EU wanted to send the ambassadors back so that some lines of communication would be open. But the ministers were also to discuss taking new actions against Iran, possibly including suspending high-level meetings.

There were hopes among the ministers that a long-standing stalemate in the bloc's relations with Ankara would come to an end at Tuesday's meeting.

Athens has been hocking aid for its ancient rival Turkey that is designed to help Ankara adjust to a customs union with the EU. The dispute has also held up a formal meeting between the EU and Turkey since 1995.

Diplomats said Greece now looked as if it was prepared to lift its block on the aid and that a meeting later on Tuesday with Turkish Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller could go ahead.

Greek Foreign Affairs Minister Theodoros Pangalos did not rule out such a move, but said he wanted to discuss the matter with the Dutch EU presidency first.

Ministers were greeted as they arrived by several hundred demonstrators urging them to retain a tough stance against Iran.

Turkish opposition seeks 'Islamist-free' government coalition

ANKARA (R) — A Turkish leftist leader has launched a search for an alternative to the troubled Islamist-led coalition as the powerful military gave a rare briefing to reporters on its activities.

The mass circulation daily Milliyet said on Tuesday Democratic Left Party (DSP) leader Bulent Ecevit was to hold talks with other opposition leaders on forming a government excluding the ruling Islamist Welfare Party.

"A search without Welfare," a Milliyet headline said. "The search for an alternative to the (coalition) has accelerated. The DSP leader has begun talks," the liberal daily Yeni Yuzyl said.

The government of Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan took a body blow at the weekend when two Conservative ministers resigned in protest at Welfare Party leader Erbakan's failure to halt a religious upsurge, as demanded by the military.

The secularist military chiefs-of-staff, which issued its demand for a crackdown

on Islamists two months ago, were to begin a briefing to Turkish and foreign journalists at its headquarters at 10 a.m. (07:00 GMT) about its activities.

Initial secularist moves against Islamist activism were evident on Monday when police officials said they had closed down more than 20 buildings in two western districts where Islamists were holding illegal Koran lessons.

Separately, a quasi-military court began hearing a case against the preacher at a mosque in the courtyard of Welfare Party headquarters, the state-run Anatolian news agency said.

Anatolian said mosque preacher Ali Kucuker faces up to three years in jail if found guilty of spreading hatred in a speech at Friday prayers in February.

Mr. Erbakan, modern Turkey's first Islamist prime minister, signed a communique issued by the military-dominated National Security Council on Saturday agreeing to go-ahead with curbs on the role of religion in public life.

Israel's foreign minister to meet Albright in U.S.

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel's foreign minister will meet with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in Washington this week in an effort to restart the stalled Israel-Palestinian peace talks.

Israeli media reports said Foreign Minister David Levy was invited because of the United States' frustration with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's intransigence, but Mr. Levy dismissed those claims.

Israel Radio quoted sources in (West Jerusalem) saying the American government is disappointed in Mr. Netanyahu, especially after his most recent visit to Washington in early April, and are seeking alternate channels of communication.

Mr. Levy, who will arrive in Washington on Friday, dismissed such reports as "foolish" and emphasised he would be representing the government in his visit.

"I am representing the policies of this government and I am working in conjunction with the prime minister," Mr. Levy said in an interview with Israel Radio.

The conversations between Mr. Levy and Ms. Albright are expected to focus on ways to renew the faltering peace process. Talks between Israel and the Palestinians have been at an impasse since Israel broke ground last month for a new housing project for Jews in Arab East Jerusalem.

Mr. Levy has spoken recently of the need to introduce new rules of the game to encourage a renewal of talks, but he has stood firm on supporting Israel's decision to build in Jerusalem.

"Nothing in the (Israel-Palestinian peace) accords forbids us from building in Jerusalem, and of course it is our right to build there. The Americans know this," he said.

Watchdog to rule on BA's objection on Air Algerie

VERSAILLES (AFP) — The French state's top administrative watchdog, the council of state, will rule on a British Airways (BA) objection to the siting of an Air Algerie check-in desk at Charles de Gaulle airport, officials said Tuesday.

A court in Versailles ruled itself unable to handle the

BA complaint which demands separate security arrangements for the Algerian carrier. Air Algerie resumed regular flights to Paris's Roissy Charles de Gaulle airport on Friday, ending a two-year suspension of services.

BA said that Air Algerie poses a special security threat given the conflict tak-

ing place in Algeria for the past five years.

The British carrier on Friday closed its check-in at the Paris airport in protest. Air Algerie objected to the complaint which it said was seeking to ostracise the company.

BA Europe Manager George Cooper said Monday the issue was "not

a problem about Air Algerie, but about the level of security assessed by governments."

Air Algerie, the Algerian state airline, had called off its flights to Paris in June 1995 to protest a move by airport authorities to remove its operations to an isolated terminal because of fears of terrorist attacks.

Record candidates sign up for Iran's next elections

TEHRAN (AFP) — A record 238 people have signed up to contest next month's presidential election in Iran, but only a small number are expected to be approved, the Interior Ministry announced on Tuesday.

The ministry said it forwarded the list of hopefuls — including several women — to the 12-member council of the guardians, which will vet them to ensure they meet legal and ideological requirements.

Once a list of eligible candidates is released, they can launch a 12-day campaign for the May 23 polls. Interior Minister Ali Mohammad Besharati said. Campaigning will have to stop 24 hours before the elections start.

Black Sea forum plans six cooperation projects

ISTANBUL (R) — A forum of Black Sea countries unveiled plans on Tuesday for six regional cooperation projects aimed at aiding development in the region.

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) group gathered in Istanbul on Monday for a meeting looking to regional cooperation and unity as a way to combat regional conflicts.

Erhard Busek of the Southeast European Cooperation Initiative told delegates at the plenary session initiatives from member countries were vital to putting the forum's ideas into practice.

He said the BSEC would focus on energy conservation, gas pipelines, development of small and medium sized enterprises, infrastructure, a project related to the use of the Danube River and another to speed up border access in the region.

"The joint vision of all those gathered here is to see the Black Sea as a prosperous place of peace and stability, cleansed of tensions and clashes," Turkish President Suleiman Demirel told the opening session of the BSEC late on Monday.

Mr. Demirel said many of the member countries — Turkey, Greece, Moldova, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine and Russia — had turned their backs on each other and sometimes had even been enemies.

"But today we are happy to see, as a result

of this imaginative initiative, that this region's countries want to leave the past behind... that they are working hard and with determination to create a 'Black Sea' vision where cooperation takes the place of conflict and disagreement," he said.

BSEC officials have said that bilateral antagonism as well as the lack of a private sector in some member states and the troubled economies of ex-Soviet states, have slowed down the group, but they hope to finally have a free trade zone in place in the region by 2010.

BSEC, the brainchild of former Turkish President Turgut Ozal, was set up in June 1992 in Istanbul amid hopes for Turkey's leadership potential in the region.

The group has a secretariat in Istanbul, a parliamentary assembly, a private-sector business council, an economic data centre and several working bodies. A Black Sea Trade and Development Bank will open in Thessaloniki in May.

But it has undertaken no projects so far, and conference organisers hope the Istanbul conference will come up with concrete plans.

Six heads of state, ministers of transport, economy and communication, representatives of the World Bank, the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, and the International Finance Corporation, and some 600 businessmen are attending the conference.



Alcoholic milk goes on sale in Britain

LONDON (AFP) — Alcoholic milk has gone on sale in Britain, prompting outrage from drink concern groups and accusations that manufacturers are targeting children. Meco — described as an "alcoholic dairy cooler" with a strength of five per cent and available in strawberry and banana flavours — is being made by a firm outside Oxford in central England following its launch in Australia eight months ago. The company also plans to bring out chocolate and iced coffee versions and to expand sales to pubs and clubs nationwide. The firm said it had taken care to highlight the drink's alcoholic content and to design a label which did not appeal to children. But alcohol pressure groups called the drink "wholly irresponsible", "shocking" and a "cynical" attempt to market to children. "It beggars belief," said a spokesman for Alcohol Concern. "Milk is a healthy drink you associate with pouring on cereals. We are extremely concerned about this."

China's oldest panda celebrates 35th birthday

BEIJING (R) — Duda, the world's oldest living captive giant panda, has celebrated her 35th birthday with a special dinner of milk and cake in a zoo in central China, state television said on Monday. Duda, a huge red bow tied around her waist, slurped from a large bowl of milk while her keepers lit candles on her cake. Duda has lost most of her teeth and can only eat the most tender of bamboo stalks, Chinese central television said. Pandas seldom live beyond the age of 25. Duda's keepers at Wuhan Zoo in Hubei province planned to enter her for the Guinness book of records as the world's oldest living panda in captivity, the television said.

Pamela Anderson Lee in court for breach of contract

LOS ANGELES (R) — Pamela Anderson Lee, best known as a swimsuit lifeguard in TV's "Baywatch," was in court Monday where her lawyer said she backed out of a movie deal because the script included simulated sex. The filmmakers charge, however, that she broke her contract because she got a better offer that could make her a movie star. Wearing a white suit with a mini-skirt, Lee sat listening to opening statements by a lawyer of the Private Movie Co. "Hello, She Lied," to make the feature film, "Barb Wire." Plaintiff lawyer Adam Miller scoffed at the argument that the actress, who is married to Motley Crue drummer Tommy Lee and whom he described as "a world-famous Playboy model," dropped out of the project because the film was too racy. "Your honour, this is Pamela Anderson," he told Los Angeles Superior Court Judge David Horowitz. "Pamela Anderson has never done a project outside television that did not have nudity." Lee has appeared in a Playboy magazine pictorial. Lee's lawyer, Major Langer, claimed the actress never agreed to a contract because the script included "simulated sex" in the shower and on a pool table. "One thing is true, that Pamela Lee does not and never has had a problem with nudity," said Langer, of the actress who recently stripped on network television when she hosted "Saturday Night Live." "(However) she did have a problem with the nudity and sexuality in this film," her lawyer said, adding that the sex scenes were written out of the movie when it was later made with model Kathy Ireland in the lead.